

The Intermediatorial Work of Christ through His Threefold Office: A Theological Appropriation from an African Perspective

By

Joshua Mupangilayi Makanda

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SUPERVISOR: Dr. ROBERT VOSLOO

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DECLARATION

I declare that The Intermediatorial Work of Christ Through His Threefold Office: A Theological Appropriation from an African Perspective is solely my own work and the complete references are a means of acknowledging all quoted and committed sources.

Signed.....
Joshua Mupangayi Makanda [14735857]

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SUMMARY

In the midst of suffering, poverty and moral crisis, many Africans have never been able to rely on Christ as the only Lord and Saviour of their lives. In spite of their regular church attendance to the Church, many of the Africans so called believers have never stopped worshipping Ancestors, consulting Sangomas, and using witchcrafts whenever things go wrong in their lives. Thus for many Africans Christ has been perceived incapable to respond to the crises of their lives, and the Church has been regarded irrelevant to address the issues of Africans. For many Africans, Christianity is just a formality. As a consequence, many of African believers are still under the bondage of sin and demons as many churches are struggling to appropriately apply the meaning of Christ's work of salvation in practical ways in an African context. Therefore, in the light of the brokenness and sinfulness of humans and the existence of tragedy, on earth, especially on the African continent and its syncretism, this study investigates the meaning of Jesus Christ's mediatorial work in His threefold office for the redemption and liberation of human beings in general, and how can the mediatorial work of Christ be effectively appropriated in light of African contexts.

Since the aim in this work is to explore the meaning of Jesus Christ's mediatorial work of salvation for human beings in general and the manner in which his work can be appropriated in the African context, in chapter one, we have presented the background in which the tragic condition of human beings in general, and of Africans in particular, is viewed in need for the redemptive mediatorial work of Christ in his threefold office.

In chapter two, we discussed the background of the messianic threefold office of Christ in its biblical and historical origin and meaning, some objections to the notion of the threefold office of Christ and, finally, some contemporary interpretations of the threefold office of Christ.

From chapter three to chapter five, we thus strived to explain each of the three offices of Christ in its biblical and historical origins; and in its messianic function; in chapter four, on the messianic priestly office, we explained the theological meaning of Christ's atoning

work. We also discussed the contemporary meaning for each office.

Finally in chapter six, we have concluded our thesis with a proposed Christology. African theologians stress Jesus' central place within African Christianity and that there is a critical need to articulate the reality and significance of Christ in relation to the lives of Africans. African theologians are encouraged to articulate the image of Christ who is able to inspire the Church and Christians in Africa to follow the path of reconciliation, justice, and peace. Constructing African Christologies of reconciliation, justice, and peace poses a fruitful challenge to African theologians and Christians. This task entails constructing a Christology in which there is a meeting place where Christ is conversing with the soul of Africa.

The Christological approach that has often been proposed by many African theologians is a functional one, known as "a Christology from below." In this Christology the main emphasis is on what Christ has done for our salvation, rather than Christ's nature. With a functional Christology some names have been attributed to Christ to describe his function: "Christ the Witch-Doctor", "Christ the healer", "Christ the Medicine man", "Christ the Nganga", "Christ the Chief", "Christ the ancestor", "Christ the liberator", and "Christ the king".

It has been pointed out that Christology in Africa will be meaningful and empowering only when we translate it to our contextual situation in daily life. When Africans are absolutely certain that Jesus Christ is sufficiently able to address their profoundest African problems, they will be compelled to yield to Him as their Lord and saviour.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND

The person and the work of Jesus Christ are at the heart of Christian faith. Thus the core of Christian theology is Christology. Christianity is viewed by many as a rescue religion. It declares that God has taken the initiative in Jesus Christ to deliver His people from their enemies, these enemies being seen as Sin, the Devil, and Death. Mbiti states that: “Christian theology ought properly to be Christology, for theology falls or stands on how it understands, translates and interprets Jesus Christ, at a given time, place and human situation.”¹ The preoccupation of the New Testament is not just with the ontological nature of Jesus Christ, but also the nature of His function as the Saviour. African theologians stress Jesus’ central place within African Christianity and the critical need to articulate the reality and significance of Christ in relation to the lives of Africans, as pointed out by Mugambi & Magesa: “Theology is not Christian at all when it does not offer Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the answer to the human quest.”² In order to appreciate the mediatorial work of Christ in what He has done for us, we must first understand our fallen nature and its consequences.

Since the attempt in this work is to explore the meaning of Jesus Christ’s mediatorial work of salvation for human beings and the manner in which his work can be appropriated in the African context, this background will present the tragic condition of human beings in general, and of Africans in particular, in view of the need for the redemptive mediatorial work of Christ in his threefold office.

The Bible and the Christian tradition describe the sinful, broken and tragic condition of humankind, of human society and of nature in very clear language. In the Christian tradition the case is put forward that the fall of Adam and Eve has reversed God’s Creation, vandalized the divine *shalom*, and infected humankind with blindness, ignorance, corruption, and guilt. The blindness, ignorance, and guilt involved in humankind’s fall are not the only things listed as we analyze the Scriptures. Due to sin we also languished from the destructive pollution of this inherited sinful condition, which

¹ Mbiti, 1971:190

² Mugambi & Magesa, 1989:x

infects every part of us from the moment of our conception. “Brought forth in iniquity” (Psalm. 51: 5), “There is no one who does what is good (Psalm 14: 1 - 3), declares the Psalmist; “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness (in us)” (Isaiah 1:6), states Isaiah.

The Bible clearly demonstrates that sin is a disease which pollutes every cell of our body. It goes even further to point out how our hearts are “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17: 9). There is no wonder, then, that some people do not consider their sin as evil and dangerous, and why they make excuses for it. They go about deceiving themselves into the belief that sin is not quite as sinful as God’s word says it is and that they are not as bad as they really are. They invent a long stream of smooth words and fuzzy phrases, coined to explain away the corruption of sin. But the apostle Paul is conscious of the reality of sin as he complains that “my own behaviour baffles me. For I find myself doing what I really loathe, but not doing what I really want to do ... I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power. When I want to do good, only evil is within my reach ... It makes me a prisoner to the law of sin which is inherent in my mortal body. For, left to myself, I serve the law of God with my mind, but in my unspiritual nature I serve the law of sin. “It is an agonizing situation ... Who can set me free from the prison of this mortal body? Only Christ!” (Romans 7: 14 - 25 Phillips Translation). Our bodies, which are “fearfully and wonderfully made” by God’s marvellous work of creation (Psalm 139: 14), become instruments to act out the wickedness that would otherwise lie hidden in our hearts (Romans. 6: 13). It is the guilt and the pollution from this sin that renders us miserable. Life apart from God’s forgiveness is described in the language of sickness, the trembling, sweaty weakness of a sick body trying to fight off a high fever (Psalm. 32: 3 - 5). We have no peace with either God or neighbour (Romans. 3: 17), and we are “separated from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians. 2: 12).

Those who do not have this tremendous inner struggle have either come through it by faith or they are dishonest people. They are not grieved by their sins, because they choose to overlook them. Some have become hardened by their sins, and they no longer feel any pangs of conscience. Others have designed for themselves a framework of

elaborate excuses and justification for everything they do, absolving themselves of all weakness and faults. Thus sin leaves us ignorant, guilty, and polluted, and therefore utterly miserable.

Berkhof in an allusion to what God originally intended humans to be, says:

As created by God, he was prophet, priest, and king, and as such was endowed with knowledge and understanding, with righteousness and holiness, and with dominion over the lower creation. Sin affected the entire life of man and manifested itself not only as ignorance, blindness, error, and untruthfulness; but also as unrighteousness, guilt, and moral pollution; and in addition to that as misery, death, and destruction. Hence it was necessary that Christ, as our Mediator, should be prophet, priest, and king. As Prophet he represents God with man; as Priest He represents man in the presence of God, and as King he exercises dominion and restores the original dominion of man.³

Augustine's view of sin is noteworthy, though considered controversial by many modern theologians, considers sin as a 'hereditary disease', which transmits itself from one generation to another, as a 'power' which holds us captive with no ability to liberate ourselves; finally, as 'forensic concept-guilt', this is passed down from one generation to another. To each of these problems of sin, he points to Christ as the solution.⁴ Aquinas goes on to compare the sin of Adam and Eve (original sin) as infectious leprosy which spreads from flesh to the soul.⁵ Justin Martyr, referring to Mosaic Law (Deut. 27: 26), sees the whole human race under curse for transgressing God's ordinances. He blames demons for obsessing and infecting the souls and bodies of humans with vice and corruption. Christ became human to conquer the serpent for human salvation.⁶

In his book *Christus Victor*, Gustav Aulén saw Christ's conquest of humankind's enemies (Sin, Death, and the Devil) as the salvation of humans:

The work of Christ is first and foremost the victory over the powers which hold mankind in bondage: sin, death, and the devil. These may be said to be in a measure personified, but in any case they are objective powers; and

³ Berkhof 1941:357

⁴ McGrath 2001:444-445

⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1-11, 84, 2

⁶ Kelly, 1977:167

the victory of Christ creates a new situation, bringing their rule to an end, and setting men free from their dominion.⁷

Aulén's point is vital in our quest of understanding Christ's work of salvation in African context, as many Africans consider Christianity to be inefficacious in dealing with their vulnerability and providing adequate security and protection. In relation to the African Christological preoccupation, Adolf Köberle is right as he points out in drawing on the work of Gustaf Wringren and to Karl Barth that:

The greatest need of our existence is due to the fact that we are imprisoned under the despotic rule of a power that is against God and that will not release us. Thus we have not fully understood the implications of the coming of Jesus into history if we glorify Him only as the revealer of the Father. Above and beyond this, Jesus must be recognized and proclaimed as the Redeemer who appeared to destroy the work of the devil.⁸

Since many Africans are concerned about the work of the devil, the great need among African Christians is the assurance of the full active presence of Jesus Christ in their lives and in their Continent. As Osadolor Imasogie emphasizes, "for religion to be valid it must pervade the whole of humankind's existence if it is to meet humankind's needs as he understands them."⁹ The Christ that is valid to the Africans to the extent of winning their complete trust and dependence must first and foremost pervade the entire spectrum of the African world and life. And Jesus as presented in the New Testament is able to do this. Howard Marshall notes that the religious thinking of the New Testament era "knew many strange and mighty powers which controlled the universe and the fate of men."¹⁰ In the midst of such a strong belief that humankind was in need of salvation and protection from the threat of evil, demonic, and arbitrary forces, the "Christian answer was that Christ was supreme over all such powers, both real and imaginary."¹¹ Therefore, since Christ is at the right hand of God and all powers and principalities have been subjected to him, Africans need to trust him for all their security needs. A worldview entrenched in this aspect of Christ will win the trust and the dependence of the African Christian.

This sinful condition of human society is manifested in a variety of ways on the African

⁷Aulén 1975:20

⁸Köberle 1966:68

⁹Imasogie 1983:23

¹⁰Marshall, 1981:65

¹¹Ibid.

Continent. The former president of Zaïre (now Democratic Republic of Congo), Mobutu Sese Seko, in his speech in the UN in 1974, said that Africa is the only continent in the world to have suffered abominable atrocity from those who claimed to have come to civilize it. Instead of so-called civilization, they have dehumanized the African people in breaking their spirits, using them as animals, and plundering Africa of its riches. Kwame Bediako points out the complaint in Waterman's article, saying: "The Africans have been treated by us (Europeans) as having no religion, no language, no tradition, no institutions, no racial character of their own, as empty vessels to be filled with European and American goods."¹² This has been the same experience of the Native Americans, as Rieger says, in quoting Herder, that "their 'savagery, passivity, and weakness' are not innate but caused by the Spaniards who destroyed their culture."¹³ Thus, it is not surprising to see many Africans struggling to regain a sense of their humanity after having been dehumanized for many centuries. Mugambi and Wasike claim that:

Today the African society may seem to be in a state of near chaos in the realm of morality. People are disillusioned after suffering major cultural upheavals in just under a century. The effects of colonial intervention on the indigenous African communities cannot be under-rated.¹⁴

In the context of South Africa, it is believed that the Apartheid system brought a unique challenge to the spiritual and moral life of many people in South Africa. The injustice of the system drew many different responses from the many churches and individual believers.¹⁵ Some became active in liberation theology and praxis, while others fought actively against liberation movements. A small number of people adopted a pacifist stance. Each of these groups justified their position on the basis of their interpretation of Scripture. While the common enemy was the injustice of the Apartheid government system, social justice was focused on overcoming the system in setting oppressed people free. Having achieved that goal, many South Africans appear now to be in an ethically ambiguous situation. After struggling against, or ignoring, the structural injustice which was built into the law of the land, and after the subsequent overthrow of Apartheid, a new

¹² Bediako 1983:123

¹³ Rieger 2007:225

¹⁴ Mugambi and Wasike 1999:80

¹⁵ De Gruchy, J. 1986. *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (2nd Edition) Cape Town: Philip

era of personal moral lassitude and contempt for the law of the land appears to be emerging. This has resulted in a growing violent crime wave as well as white collar crime at unprecedented levels.¹⁶ Although the anamnesis of the South African pathological social and moral situation is believed by many to be based on Apartheid, theologically speaking the fundamental cause is related to the reality of the sinfulness of human nature for which Christ came to set us free. In fact, Tutu is right to say: “This is a moral universe, which means that despite all the evidence that seems to be to the contrary, there is no way that evil and injustice and oppression and lies can have the last word. God is a God who cares about right and wrong. God cares about justice and injustice.”¹⁷

However, for many Africans the cause of all their problems is attributed to the devil and to his agents. Immasogie writes that to the typical African, it is mainly evil forces that rule the earth that make life unsafe for all. There is, to most Africans, powerful force hunting after them to destroy their life, family harmony, peace of mind, wealth and health.¹⁸ It is generally believed, according to Kalu, that the “presence of evil spirits makes life in the human world extremely precarious.”¹⁹

The various social and moral pathologies of South Africa reflect this sinful, broken and tragic situation. Conflict, violence and lawlessness were expected to come to an end following the end of an authoritarian and criminal regime. But, unfortunately, this optimistic expectation rarely materializes. Post-Apartheid South Africa offers a classic case in point. Despite the country’s much-heralded political transition, interpersonal violence, criminality and lawlessness have together remained a constitutive element of South African society. Beyond the immediately apparent pain and trauma which violent and lawless actions inflict on the victims, continually high violent crime rates are widely regarded as an ongoing threat to South Africa’s general social peace, reconciliation and socio-economic development. One of the most threatening consequences of these persistently high crime rates is the disillusionment of South African citizens with the new state’s ability to act effectively as a sovereign. As a result, many citizens rely on self-

¹⁶ Kretzschmar & Hulley 1998

¹⁷ Tutu (2004:20)

¹⁸ Immasogie (1983:63)

¹⁹ Kalu (1979:16)

help safety measures.

More than decade and half after the end of Apartheid regime, the majority of South African whites and blacks have not yet come to a genuine reconciliation, to mutual acceptance, and to respect for each other. The high level of racism and segregation in South Africa is undeniable in the different classes of South African society, as consistently there are incidents exposing the masked disease of racism from both blacks and whites. In February 2008, there was a series of racial incidents that strongly awakened the consciousness of people to this reality. One of the incidents was a racist video shot and distributed by some white students of the University of the Free State. The video showed the students' ritualized humiliation of four black workers employed by the University, including, allegedly, secretly urinating in food that the workers had to eat.²⁰

Racism has eaten deeply into the fabric of South African society. It has shaped the way people see each other. Therefore, profound and fundamental changes are required in the way South Africans understand and relate to each other.

Africa is experiencing a serious crisis, says Jackson (2002) in her accurately titled book *AIDS Africa – Continent in Crisis*. The Sub-Saharan Africa is more heavily affected by HIV and AIDS than any other region of the world, with South Africa emerging as one of the most 'prolific' carriers of the virus. An estimated 22.5 million people are living with HIV in the region - around two thirds of the global total. In 2009 around 1.3 million people died from AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and 1.8 million people became infected with HIV. Since the beginning of the epidemic, 14.8 million children have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS.²¹

The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in South Africa poses major challenges for both government and civil society groups. HIV/AIDS is not just a health issue, but a national crisis. According to Brown:

²⁰ University World News-Special Africa Edition at www.Universityworldnews.Com/index.php?

²¹ UNAIDS (2010) 'UNAIDS report on the global AIDS epidemic'.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is Africa's most serious development crisis, with Southern Africa bearing the brunt with one in seven of the adult population living with HIV/AIDS. The scale, severity and impact of HIV/AIDS on these societies is destroying the capacity of governments and communities to function effectively.²²

The devastating effects of HIV/Aids in all parts of the world, particularly in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are painfully noted. This tidal wave of suffering and death, the loss of income, the burden of orphan care, the loss of hope, the desperation inflicted upon individuals and communities, and the accompanying social stigma that threatens the dignity of the individual, make it difficult in many instances to deal realistically with the crisis. There is a need for the church to address the disturbing issues related to this epidemic in their theological, ethical, and pastoral dimensions, with a view to facilitating the whole church's pastoral care of the infected and the affected. This will include working to influence behavioural changes and responsible lifestyles.

One of the social issues that the South African government and various segments of the Church do not agree on is that of abortion. A Pretoria High Court judgment, according to which girls may now procure an abortion without their parents' knowledge, caught the serious attention of the Southern African Bishop's conference. As spokesperson, Tlhagale (in Southern Africa Bishop's Conference 2004) delivered a joined statement by the Conference on this High Court judgment, in which he wished "... to protest in the strongest terms possible the further erosion of the unsurpassable value of life ..."²³ He goes on to state that: "This judgment will lead to the weakening of individual consciences, especially of those of young people whose conscience formation is at a critical stage ... procured abortion is the deliberate and direct killing of a human being at any time between conception and birth. The act is totally and absolutely unacceptable. Killing an innocent human being is always gravely immoral."²⁴

A further result of this judgment is that the value of the family is seriously undermined by it. It does not only encourage sexual permissiveness, but it also ignores the esteem of

²² Heywood 2004

²³ Tlhagale 2004:1. *Homily – Chrism Mass*: Straight talking from Archbishop Buti Tlhagala on Holy Thursday at the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral of Christ the in Johannesburg.

²⁴ Ibid.

motherhood. Tihagala expresses a strong word to the lawmakers when he says, “The judgment, we maintain, is a direct assault on the value of family as the sanctuary of life. We cannot rule out the question of complicity in the evil of abortion with regard to those who make such laws”²⁵ Mofokeng is in agreement about moral decay as a result of this kind of Judgment. “Unfortunately some of the laws passed by our new democratic parliament tend to encourage the moral decay in our society.”²⁶

Poverty and inequality in South Africa are rooted in the legacy of the apartheid system. Apartheid excluded the majority of the population from the political process, from access to markets, from quality government services, and from ownership of land and other assets. The effects of inadequate education among black society before 1994 are a particular constraint on poverty elimination. Most of the people who are currently unemployed lack the skills required to compete in the formal employment market, or to succeed as entrepreneurs. This history has left South Africa as one of the most unequal countries in the world. The poorest 40 percent are responsible for less than 10 percent of total expenditure, whilst the richest 10 percent are responsible for almost half.²⁷ The widespread poverty in Africa in general is manifested in the lack of access to basic necessities (e.g. food, housing, water, clothing) needed for sustaining a dignified human existence. These consequences of poverty are so egregious that the church needs to become more assertive in confronting these injustices. The church should be proactive in addressing these concerns if it has to remain faithful to its prophetic mandate.

Women, and in particular female-headed households, are particularly vulnerable to poverty in South Africa. Estimates of unemployment among black women have been put as high as 73 percent.²⁸ The role of women has been historically downplayed in the development process and prevailing cultural attitudes continue to marginalize women’s decision-making role in society, and limit their access to basic rights (e.g. land ownership).²⁹

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ndada & Mofokeng 2001:56

²⁷ DFID. 2002. Southern Africa Regional Strategy paper. DFID, Pretoria

²⁸ Aliber, M. 2001. Study of the incidence and nature of chronic poverty and development policy in South Africa: An overview. Unpublished paper: University of the Western Cape. Cape Town.

²⁹ Institute of Natural resources 2003. Op. cit.

Child Abuse is one of the most abominable sinful behaviours in South African society. When some cases are exposed and propagated by the media, such as the senseless gang raping of a baby, it calls for a general outcry by the society. The anger and hurt felt by the multitude of victims, however, normally goes unnoticed. Child abuse by people in authority and those who are supposed to uphold and help build the moral fibre of society, such as teachers, when exposed, also generally leads to an outcry by society. The Roman Catholic Church, in its recent history, has been plagued by revelations of sexual abuse committed by some of its clergy. It can be considered, therefore, that the Church is not exempt from the moral crisis. Tihagale points out: "One reported case of sexual abuse is one case too many."³⁰

According to a new report by South African NGO 'Solidarity Help Hand', "A child is raped in South Africa every three minutes. Only 1.3 percent of child rapes were reported to the police ... 1410 children were murdered in 2007/08, and the number of attempted murders on children increased 22 percent compared to the previous year."³¹

The gay communities in South Africa have won many legal battles in recent years, in light of the rights of the individual that are protected by the South African Constitution. The likely recognition of gay unions or civil partnerships by the state or the courts of law brings a contentious discussion and challenge to the Church. Tihagale points out that "The church upholds heterosexual unions."³² According to Tihagale, "Such Gay unions would undermine the moral basis of heterosexual marriages. It would undermine the family, the very cornerstone of society."³³ Tihagale goes on to comment that the human rights culture favours and promotes the rights of individuals irrespective of their sexual orientation. Mofokeng agrees with Tihagale that the legitimizing of, amongst other things, homosexuality, "... encourages the moral decay in our society."³⁴ To the view of

³⁰ Tihagale 2003:1. *Installation Homily*: The homily given by Archbishop Buti at his installation to the Diocese of Johannesburg – Ellis Park, stadium, Johannesburg (Feasts of Sts Peter and Paul). Unpublished homily Johannesburg: Catholic Diocese of Johannesburg.

³¹ Report: In South Africa a child is raped every three minutes| Now Public News Coverage <http://www.nowpublic.com/world/report-south-africa-child-raped-every-three-minutes>.

³² Tihagale (2003:1)

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Mofokeng (2001:56)

some people, Tlhagale and Mofokeng position might be considered homophobic, in spite the fact that their stands have nothing to do with homophobia, but disapproval of homosexuality.

Though in the view of many Westerners the issues mentioned may not be perceived as moral crisis, but for many African they seriously considered as moral crisis. And need divine intervention.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the light of the brokenness and sinfulness of humans and the existence of tragedy, on earth, especially on the African continent, this study investigates the following question: What is the meaning of Jesus Christ's mediatorial work in His threefold office for the redemption and liberation of human beings and for the rest of creation? And how can Christ's mediatorial work be appropriated in an African context?

Maimela observes that a "large number of African Christians believe that the Church is not interested in their daily misfortunes, illness, practical problems of evil and witchcraft, bad luck, poverty, barrenness and in short, all their concrete social problems."³⁵ Oduyoye points out that many Africans adopt Christianity because of spiritual and social struggle. Thus Africans expect Christianity to be efficacious in overcoming life's hazards. In Africans' world view, religion is neither a hobby nor an additive; rather, it is the essence of life. Africans approach life from the premise that says religion is the answer to all their concrete social problems and spiritual struggles.³⁶ For Africans "religion is about salvation."³⁷ The Akan of Ghana see salvation as:

The condition, the context, or the space in which human well-being and the ultimate fulfilment of the individual destiny is made possible. It means the absence of everything that threatens and destroys human life or disturbs the condition that guarantees prosperity and well-being. Finally, salvation means the conditions that preserve or restore the harmonies of creation so that the rhythm of life may go on undisturbed in order that human beings may have

³⁵ Maimela 1991:8-9

³⁶ Oduyoye 1986:98-99

³⁷ Okorochoa 1994:61

the space to be human.³⁸

The Akan's view of salvation concords with that of the majority of Africans in general; to Africans, salvation concerns no less than the "total being" of life.³⁹ The ultimate goal of Africans is to live in the "sacred presence where no destructive forces dwell."⁴⁰ This contradicts the salvation of Christ as portrayed in some mainline Christianity. Therein, the salvation of Christ appears to be only utilizable in the after-life, not now. Jesus Christ, the giver of Christian salvation, seems only sufficient to lead the Christian's soul to heaven, but is unable to address the contemporary dilemmas of the African life. His salvation seems to show little or no interest in the ideal condition for human well-being and ultimate self-fulfilment, or protection from evil forces of destruction, the preservation of the cosmic and social order and harmony, and restoration from the broken life.⁴¹

In the same line of thinking, Bosch speaking of salvation in the book of Luke points out that for Luke, salvation means acceptance, fellowship, & new life. "Whatever salvation is, then, in every specific context, it includes the total transformation of human life, forgiveness of sin, healing from infirmities, and release from any kind of bondage."⁴² Bosch goes on to say "for Luke, salvation actually had six dimensions; economic, social, political, physical, psychological, and spiritual."⁴³

Since Christ's mediatorial work of salvation is always approached by many African Christians with much expectation, as for Africans Christ is the absolute essence of Christianity, the promises of salvation in all aspects, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life are contingent upon him. Since Christ is the absolute essence of Christianity, a profound grasp of the meaning of his work of salvation is crucial. In order to be confident upon Christ, it is necessary for African Christians to gain a sound understanding of his mediatorial work.

In his book *Christian Theology*, McGrath points out Turretini's statement that the

³⁸ Mugabe 1999: 240

³⁹ Okorochoa 1994:75-76

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 76

⁴¹ Akrong in Mugabe, 1999:240

⁴² Bosch 1991:107

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 117

threefold misery of human beings resulting from sin - ignorance, guilt, and tyranny and bondage by sin - required the mediatorial work of Christ in his threefold office. Ignorance is healed by the prophetic, guilt by the priestly, and the tyranny and the bondage of sin by the kingly office. Prophetic light scatters the darkness of error; the merit of the priest takes away guilt and procures reconciliation for us; the power of the king removes the tyranny of sin and death. The prophet reveals God to us; the priest guides us to God; and the king joins us together and glorifies us with God. The prophet enlightens the mind by the Spirit of illumination; the priest, by the Spirit of consolation, tranquilizes the heart and conscience; the king, by the Spirit of sanctification, subdues rebellious affectations.⁴⁴

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- This research will be done by means of a literature survey.
- Literature of various authors from the field of theology and Christology will be read, interpreted, discussed and compared.
- This research will discuss the meaning of Christ's threefold office for the salvation of human beings in general, and its appropriation in the context of the brokenness of humans and society in Africa.
- To view Christology in African perspective means studying it with an African mindset. African theologians are saying about Christ that, unless missionaries become familiar with the African worldview and interact continuously with Africans, African images of Christ will remain difficult for them to comprehend.⁴⁵

The limitations imposed in this dissertation do not diverge from the general overview of Christology which has been covered. The scope of the dissertation is primarily a Christological perspective on the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. Although there are some objections by some theologians in approaching Christology under the heading of the threefold office, as we shall see further, the categorization of the mission and work of Christ under the threefold office is biblically justifiable in understanding with clarity what Christ had done for us. It is the best way of understanding the

⁴⁴ McGrath, 2001:413

⁴⁵ Taylor, 1963:35

consistency and the immutability of God's redemptive plan in its progressive and unfolding revelation from the Old Covenant to its fulfilment in the New Covenant in the person of Christ. As the New Covenant has its roots in the Old Covenant, it is impossible, if not senseless; to study the mediatorial work of Christ without taking into consideration its heritage in the Old Covenant.

The mediatorial work of Christ is considered under the title of the three offices for the sake of presenting it more logically and systematically. But we need to be cautious of separating the various functions as it cannot be divided into three separate and independent parts. The fact that the three offices are united in one Person of Christ does raise certain questions. For example, how can all three offices operate at the same time? Some have attempted to answer the problem by suggesting that the three offices should be divided chronologically, i.e. that Christ fulfils His prophetic ministry during His time on earth, His priestly ministry on the cross, and now at the right hand of God He reigns as King. Although the question of chronological sequence in which the threefold office of Christ is fulfilled asks for greater theological clarity, it should, however, be insisted that all three offices are exercised at the same time. This does not imply confusion, but rather that the three complement one another, and cohere in one work of Christ.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

The introduction constitutes chapter 1 of the study, chapter 2 discusses the origin, and the meaning of the threefold office, as well as some objections to this notion. Some contemporary interpretations of the threefold office will also be discussed. Chapter 3 discusses the original meaning and the contemporary meaning of the prophetic office of Christ. Chapter 4 discusses the original and the contemporary meaning of the priestly office. Chapter 5 will attempt to discuss the royal office in its original and contemporary meaning. Finally, in chapter 6, we will conclude in discussing how Christ's work of salvation can be effectively appropriated in African context.

CHAPTER 2: THE MESSIANIC THREEFOLD OFFICE OF CHRIST

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Christological discourse the threefold office is often considered as a fruitful and biblical way to understand work of Christ. John Calvin, its major proponent, said that:

In order that faith may find a firm basis for salvation in Christ, and thus rest in him, this principle must be laid down: the office enjoined upon Christ by the Father consists of three parts: For he was given to be prophet, king and priest¹

Since the beginning of Christianity, Jesus Christ has always been understood on the basis of the prevailing ideologies and symbols of the existing culture. The early Christians proclaimed the good news on the premise of the way that the Jewish people expected the Messiah to come. According to Pelikan, the fact that Jesus was Jewish, any attempt of ‘understanding and interpreting his message ...’ must be done with the understanding that those messages ‘took place within the context of Judaism, and it is likewise there that any attempt to understand his place in the history of human culture must begin’.² Thus, in this chapter, we will pay attention to the historical origins of the threefold office of Christ, the historical meaning, some objections to the threefold office, and finally, the contemporary usage of the threefold office of Christ in Christendom and the circle of some modern biblical scholars.

2.2 BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF THE THREEFOLD OFFICE

In this section of the origin of the threefold office, we will focus on Biblical sources for the notion of the threefold office and how, historically, theologians have come to formulate and adopt the concept of the threefold office attributed to Christ.

No doctrine of the work of Christ can be properly formulated if it neglects the Old Testament. Christ himself authorised us to find there the foundation for our understanding of his life and work (Luke 24:25-27). If we want a clue for the interpretation of his work we are more likely to find it in the Old Testament than

¹ Calvin, Inst., 2.15. 1, Ed, John T. McNeill, 1960

² Pelikan, 1999:11

anywhere else. “Salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22), so the revelation of God’s saving activity must be sought in the revelation which he gave through the Jews. Furthermore, the attitude of the New Testament writers to the Old Testament shows us that this is the right approach. They saw in Christ’s life and work the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies (2Corinthians1:20). They quoted frequently from the Old Testament and demonstrated for their readers how its promises had been fulfilled in Christ. The New Testament proclaims that the prophecies are fulfilled and with the coming of Christ the long- promised new order and age have dawned. “The final fulfilment of the promises of the Old Testament in the coming and work of Christ can only be understood as a fulfilment of the entire way of promise through the Old Testament”.³ “The work of Jesus is the fulfilment of the Old Covenant”⁴

In the context of the Old Testament, the term “Messiah” or “Anointed One” had specific relevance to the three offices into which the candidate was normally initiated by an act of Anointing - the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. Prophetically, the coming Messiah (“anointed one”) was portrayed as holding each of the offices. Typically, the New Testament identifies Christ in the context of the past principal holders of these offices, namely, the Prophet Moses (cf. Deuteronomy 18: 15 - 19), the Priest Melchizedek (cf. Psalm 110: 4), and the King David (II Samuel 7: 12, 13). The candidate for each of these offices was anointed with oil (cf. I Kings 19: 16; Exodus 29: 6, 7; I Samuel 16: 13). In fulfillment of the type, Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit as He began His public ministry (Matthew 3: 16; Mark 1: 10, 11; Luke 3: 21, 22; John 1: 32, 33).

All the proponents of the threefold office of Christ are of common agreement that the concept of the mediatorial work of Christ in the threefold office originates from the Old Testament. Brunner points out that “the fact that the Reformed theologians speak of the threefold office or work of Christ, is due to the fact that under the Old Covenant there were three theocratic figures: The Prophet, the Priest, and the King; in Jesus all that these three represented was fulfilled, since they all merged into a complete unity in His person.”⁵ Grudem goes on to explain that in the Old Testament there were three main

³ Westermann 1969:222

⁴ Brunner, 1952:273

⁵ Ibid.

offices, which were ‘the prophet (such as Nathan, 2 Samuel 7: 2), the priest (such as Abiathar, 1 Samuel 30: 7), and the king (such as King David, 2 Samuel 5: 3)’. In spite of the distinctiveness of these three offices, they all foreshadowed Christ’s work of salvation, for ‘The prophet spoke God’s words to the people; the priest offered sacrifices, prayers, and praises to God on behalf of the people; and the king ruled over the people as God’s representative’. Thus Christ fulfils the three Old Testament offices: As prophet, he reveals God to us by speaking the words to us; as priest, he offers sacrifices to God on our behalf, he himself being the sacrifice offered; and finally, as king, he rules over the church and over the universe.⁶

The concept of the threefold office of Christ is based on the comprehensive title of Jesus, i.e. *Christus*, meaning the Anointed, or the one appointed officially by God, for in the theocratic society of Israel three offices had been anointed and appointed for the people of God. In Luke 4.18-21, Jesus declared the fulfilment of Isaiah 61 which prophesied the coming of the Anointed. Jesus as the Anointed performed all three offices with perfect achievement. Pannenberg, in quoting Osiander, shows how the threefold office of Christ derived not only from the Old Testament, but also from the title ‘Christ’, as he states:

The threefold office was derived from literal meaning of the title “Christ.” This title originally meant “the anointed one,” and it was thought that according to the Old Testament a particular anointment had been required for the three offices, for those of the prophet, the king, and the priest. This justification was to be found in some of the fathers, for example, Hegesippus (according to Eusebius), Lactantius, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom.⁷

It is very important to know that the Old Testament lays the ground for understanding what it means for Christ to be Prophet, Priest, and King. In the Old Testament the accession to these functions was determined by anointing, which symbolized the Holy Spirit empowering them for the task they were called to. The prophets were called by God and anointed with oil to assume the prophetic office (1 Kings 19:16). They were the “mouthpiece of God” (1 Kings 8:15), revealing to people the will of God. The priests were chosen by God from the tribe of Levi, and were anointed with oil to that office,

⁶ Grudem 1994:624

⁷ Pannenberg, 1968:213

standing in the presence of God for their own sins and the sins of the people. The kings were also anointed (1 Samuel 9: 16; 15: 1, 17; 1 Kings 1: 34) to that office to reign over God's people, representing God, and to shepherd them.

Historically, it had been customary to categorize Christ's work of salvation in terms of the twofold and yet unitary theocratic function, as king and priest. Although the threefold office was not yet developed into a full doctrine, it generally served as a description of the work of Christ as previously ordained and fulfilled. Late Judaism is in the background, especially that of Philo and Josephus. Of course, that background would be more likely to result in a "threefold office," which does then appear in the isolated instance of Eusebius, in whose writings the division of Christ's mediatorial work into three offices, based upon Scripture, was stated. There never was any dispute with regard to the "priestly office" and the "kingly office," — the soteriology of the early church, the medieval church, and early reformation all made use of these two categories.⁸ Ritschl also points out that the application of the Old Testament theocratic function of king, priest, and prophet to the interpretation of Christ's person apparently goes back to Eusebius of Caesarea, but it became a common pattern only with the Reformation.⁹

The historical origin of this threefold type is to be found in the literal meaning of the word Christ, it being regarded as legitimate to refer 'anointed with the Holy Spirit' not only to the anointing of a king, but also to that of a priest and of a prophet. This was traceable to Jewish sources. The view of a threefold office, however, did not suppress the tradition of a twofold office, as the three designations of Christ were always used separately. Pannenberg points out that "Luther was not the author of the doctrine of the threefold office".¹⁰ He goes on to argue that "Luther spoke only of the kingship and priesthood of Christ".¹¹ With regard to Luther, Emil Brunner's argument seems different to that of Pannenberg. While Pannenberg argues that Luther spoke only of kingship and priesthood as mentioned above, Brunner argues that Luther was not unaware of the three offices of Christ. "Luther taught that Christ was Prophet, Priest, and King, though he

⁸ Weber, 1983:172

⁹ Ritschel 1900:417

¹⁰ Pannenberg, 1968:213

¹¹ Ibid

never spoke of a ‘threefold office’.”¹² “The figure three seems to go back to Andreas Osiander.”¹³ Geoffrey Wainwright writes that “in 1530, Andreas Osiander wrote to the Diet of Augsburg on the subject of false teachers who seek righteousness and holiness through meritorious works and ways of life, rather than finding them in Jesus Christ alone”.¹⁴ In that writing Osiander states:

We must understand this [the title “Christ”] of his office, since he is Christ, that is, Master, King, and High Priest. For as Christ means anointed, and only prophets, kings, and priests were anointed, so one sees that all three offices apply to him: The prophet’s office, for he only is our Teacher and Master (Matthew 23:8-10); the King’s power, for he rules forever in the house of Jacob (Luke 1:32f.); and the priest’s office, for he is priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4). That is now his office, that he may be our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, as Paul testifies (1 Corinthians 1:30).¹⁵

Although it is generally acknowledged that the threefold office of Christ was used far earlier than the Reformation, it was not developed completely into a systematic way until John Calvin.¹⁶ Wainwright explains that Calvin was not the first reformer to take into account the notion of threefold office of Christ. There were scattered anticipations of what Calvin formulated (threefold office) doctrinally. Wainwright speaks of Erasmus, who already in 1522 in his commentary on the second Psalm, “speaks of the senseless raging of the prince(s) and peoples of this world against the Lord and his anointing ...” Stating that Christ is “The prophet of the prophets,” the “Priest who has given himself as victim to purge all sins of those who believe in him,” the “ruler to whom all power has been given” and who “kindly offers peace” before returning as judge; “by his teaching he has dispelled out darkness,” “by his death he has reconciled us to God,” and “by his leadership (ductu) he has opened up the way to eternal life”.¹⁷ In spite of the notion of the threefold office of Christ in the writings of Erasmus and Osiander, Calvin’s perspicacity in biblical matters led him to lay the theological foundation of the Reformation, articulating systematically Christ’s work of salvation in the context of the

¹² Brunner, 1952:314

¹³ Pannenberg, 1968:213.

¹⁴ Wainwright, 1997:103.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Weber, 1983:172

¹⁷ Wainwright, 1997:103

threefold office:

Therefore, in order that faith may find a firm basis for salvation in Christ, and thus rest in him, this principle must be laid down: the office enjoyed upon Christ by the Father consists of three parts: For he was given to be prophet, king, and priest. Yet it would be of little value to know these names without understanding their purpose and use.¹⁸

According to Jansen the contextual traditional formula during Calvin's immediate time was a twofold one, of Priest-king. Calvin moved on to develop a triple formula of priest, king, and prophet. Although the first reformer to suggest a threefold office before Calvin was Osiander, Calvin is attributed to be the first proponent of the threefold office.¹⁹

It is probably more appropriate to say that the traditional formula owes its wide acclamation to Calvin. Notwithstanding the theological currents of criticism from Ritschl (1870) and Emersti (1773), Calvin's triple offices formula has found its way into the convictions of theologians such as Brunner, Schleiermacher, Gerhard, Bavinck, Newrmaand and transcended even into the ranks of Anglican, Lutheran and Catholic theology.²⁰

Calvin adopted the model of the threefold office for different purposes. Firstly, it helped him to give shape to his Christology. This primarily focuses on Christ's work as being the mediator of a covenant of redemption, the one chosen by God to be the saviour of the elect. Secondly, he used the threefold office to bind together Christ's person as the eternal Son of God, fully human and fully divine, to His work as redeemer, as seen in His name 'Christ' and 'Messiah,' which themselves are indicative of His being the 'anointed one.'²¹ This means that for Calvin, "the son of God, therefore, is not properly called Christ apart from his office, for it is there, in his official capacity that he manifests as the true fulfilment of the offices of the Old Testament his threefold work as prophet, priest, and king."²² This model also offers an excellent way to connect redemptive history to systematic theology. Since Christ's three offices, prophet, priest, and king, "represent the three offices of the ancient Israel to which men were appointed as servants of God",

¹⁸ Calvin, *The Inst.*, 2.15.1, Ed, John T. McNeill, 1960

¹⁹ Jansen 1956:16-32

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1956:16-36

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Muller, 1988:31

Calvin could connect the incarnation directly to Christ's work as mediator. This means that "the prophet, the king, and the priest are united in Christ, are perfected, and are thereby fulfilled and brought to conclusion in the one who is both king and priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."²³

Calvin's systematization of the *munus triplex* and introduction of it into dogmatics became the basis for the treatment of the work of Christ in the Reformed theology. Otto Weber explains that 'there were questions' about the *munus triplex*, and 'the Lutherans were also hesitant, but the doctrine is present since Matthäus Hafenreffer (1561-1619) and certainly wide spread since Johann Gerhard (1582-1637).'²⁴

According to Berkhof, Gerhard was the first among the Lutherans to develop the doctrine of the three offices. The fact that Quenstedt was not convinced of the distinction of the three offices and viewing the distinction unessential, led some Lutheran theologians to consider only two offices in which the prophetic was united with the priestly office.²⁵

2.3 HISTORICAL MEANING OF THE THREEFOLD OFFICE OF CHRIST

The doctrine of Christ's threefold office represents the Redeemer as the fulfiller of all Old Testament prophecies concerning the needs of the human being. Everything that Israel expected of its future salvation had concentrated itself more and more in the hope of the Messiah, "the anointed of God" (John 1:41; 4:25). He was thought of as the king who was to restore the glory of David's kingdom. In the course of time the prophet, who as successor of Moses was never to be wanting among God's people (Deuteronomy 18:15), became identical with the Messiah (John 6:14-15).

The mediatorial work of Christ is most appropriately treated under the threefold office. When Christ came into the world, He came with the purpose to mediate between God and humans; He was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the appellation of His title Christ indicates. Jesus the anointed of God came to do and to accomplish God's plan of salvation. In Matthew 16: 15-18, Jesus applauds Peter for the reception of the revelation

²³ Ibid., 32

²⁴ Weber, 1983: 172

²⁵ Berkhof, 1941:356

of His true identity as Peter professes “you are Christ, the Son of the living God.” This identity of Jesus was already revealed at Jesus’ baptism when the Spirit of God descended on Him in the likeness of a dove, and God certified that Jesus was His beloved Son (Matthew 3:16). Speaking of Christ’s anointing, we can relate its purpose in the context of the Old Testament dispensation in which prophets, priests, and kings were anointed to carry out God’s plan of salvation. Hence, Christ is anointed and commissioned by God to save His people from their enemies, to restore the broken relationship between people and God, and finally, to destroy completely all the enemies of God and humankind.

When human beings were originally created they enjoyed three things. First, they had the knowledge of God, as God was revealed to them and they were in fellowship with Him. Secondly, they were righteous and holy, enjoying the holy presence of God. Thirdly, they joyfully lived under God’s kingship in which they were in harmony with God, with each other, and with nature. The Heidelberg Catechism (Q/A 6) rightly states that at the creation, humankind was endowed with true righteousness, holiness, and knowledge of God, “that he might rightly know God his Creator, love him with his whole heart, and live with him in eternal blessedness, praising and glorifying him.”²⁶ But when they sinned, the human race lost the knowledge of God as their minds were darkened and they became ignorant and incapable of perceiving the truth about their sinful nature, and the truth about God. Furthermore, human beings became guilty, unrighteous, and morally corrupt. Finally, they fell under the bondage of sin and Satan, losing harmony with God, with others and with nature.

According to some strands in Reformed theology, in Paradise humankind was created as prophet, priest, and king. As prophet, human being was created with a true and right knowledge of God, to think and to speak God’s thoughts after him. As priest, human being was created to love God with all his heart, to dedicate his life to God. As king, human being was created to reign with God, to exercise dominion over the works of God’s hand. Prophet, priest, and king — created in the image of God — this was humankind’s high calling. But humankind fell from its high calling. The image of God within him became marred, tainted, warped, stained, and corrupt. From true

²⁶ Book of confessions, 1999:30

righteousness to corruption; from true holiness to impurity; from true knowledge of God to holding the truth in unrighteousness — such was humankind's fall. Humankind became a false prophet, no longer speaking and thinking God's thoughts after Him, but exalting his own word and his own thoughts as the standard of right and wrong. Humankind became a false priest, no longer dedicating his life to God, but to wickedness and evil. Humankind became a false king, no longer ruling over God's creation as God had commanded, but exploiting it for his own ends. Paradise stands ruined — the image of God in humankind shattered and stained. He is no longer the prophet, priest, and king that God created him to be.

How, then, can we be restored to the image of God? How can we be made prophet, priest, and king once again? How can we regain this true righteousness, holiness, and knowledge of God? Berkhof tells us there is but one way: Through Christ the Mediator and the Anointed — through Christ, the True Prophet, Priest and King. Berkhof states that because of the fact that humankind has fallen from his vocation of prophet, priest, and king, being affected and enslaved by sin, Christ as the mediator between God and humankind had to be prophet, priest, and king to save human beings and to restore them to their initial status:

As created by God, he (humankind) was prophet, priest, and king, and as such was endowed with knowledge and understanding, with righteousness and holiness, and with dominion over the lower creation. Sin affected the entire life of man and manifested itself not only as ignorance, blindness, error, and untruthfulness; but also as unrighteousness, guilt, and moral pollution; and in addition to that as misery, death, and destruction. Hence it was necessary that Christ, as our Mediator, should be prophet, priest, and king. As Prophet he represents God with man; as Priest He represents man in the presence of God, and as King he exercises dominion and restores the original dominion of man.²⁷

In explaining the meaning of Christ and the purpose of his anointing, the Heidelberg Catechism states:

Why is he called CHRIST, that is, the ANOINTED ONE?

Because he is ordained by God the Father and anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief Prophet and Teacher, fully revealing to us the secret purpose and will of God concerning our redemption; to be our only High Priest, having redeemed us by the one sacrifice of his body and ever interceding

²⁷ Berkhof, 1941: 357.

for us with the Father; and to be our eternal King, governing us by his Word and Spirit, and defending and sustaining us in the redemption he has won for us.²⁸

The Westminster Shorter Catechism goes on to explain the three offices of Christ, together with the nature of the work accomplished under each, as it states in questions 23-26:

What offices doth Christ execute as our redeemer?

Christ, as our redeemer, executeth the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.

How doth Christ execute the office of a Prophet?

Christ executeth the office of a Prophet, in revealing to us by his Word and his Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.

How doth Christ execute the office of a Priest?

Christ executeth the office of a Priest, in his once offering up of himself a Sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us.

How doth Christ execute the office of a King?

Christ executeth the office of a King, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.²⁹

In the history of the Church, Christians have realized the necessity for Christ to be the anointed prophet, priest and king because the three offices deal with the core problems of human misery. As a prophet, Christ addresses our darkened and ignorant minds. His words are the remedy of our souls and the light that scatters the darkness of the blindness of our mind (Psalm 107: 20; 2 Corinthians 4: 2 - 6). As our priest, He gave Himself as a ransom for our salvation and removes our guilt (Mark 10: 45; Hebrews 2: 14 - 16; 5: 1-10). Finally, as king, He destroys the devil's work and delivers us from our enemies (1 John 3: 8). Our misery is that of ignorance, guilt and enslavement to sin and the power of darkness. Jesus is anointed to bring the solution to this misery in His threefold office. This then, is our hope and our comfort - Jesus Christ is the final prophet, the great high priest, and the conquering king. There is a miraculous cure for the disease of ignorance,

²⁸ Book of confessions, 1999:33

²⁹ Ibid., 177

guilt, and pollution after all. It is what is known by some Reformed theologians as 'the triple cure.' As Calvin said, in Christ 'God has fulfilled what He has promised: that the truth of His promises would be realized in the person of the Son. Believers have found to be true Paul's saying that 'all the promises of God find their yea and amen in Christ'''.³⁰

In regard to the meaning of the threefold office of Christ, Geoffrey Wainwright, in the second part of his book *For Our Salvation*, suggests five uses in the history of doctrine. He includes, first, the most common Christological use, by which the identity of Christ is articulated in continuity with the Old Testament rite of anointing. Second, there is the baptismal use, by which Christians are identified with Christ in their baptism for full Christian identity and life. Third, there is the soteriological use - the means of understanding the work of Christ. Fourth, there is the ministerial use, the view of the minister as taking up and continuing the offices of Christ and the "functions of the entire people of God in Christ." Fifth, there is the ecclesiological use in the idea of the church as the "extension of the Incarnation."³¹

Wainwright suggests that over the centuries the threefold framework has been used in five different spheres of the church's thinking and practice, influencing its views on Christology, its understanding of baptism, its soteriology, and its ministerial and ecclesiological teachings. In the Christological use, the threefold framework helps explain the "identity and dignity" of Jesus Christ. The baptismal use describes the ways in which Christians may be said to share, by means of this sacrament, in Christ's threefold identity and dignity. The soteriological use became prevalent in the Reformation period, with its renewed emphasis on the salvation accomplished by Christ. The ministerial use arose in the Roman Church in the nineteenth century, as a way of further defining the teaching, sacerdotal, and governing role of the Bishops and Pope. Similarly, the ecclesiological use arose among Catholic theologians as a way of describing the church as an extension of the incarnation, and thus reinforcing the view that the church "shared the prophetic, priestly, and royal character of its head."³² Initially, "church" was understood as referring to Roman hierarchy alone, but Vatican II expanded

³⁰ Inst., II.ix.2.14

³¹ Ibid., 109-117

³² Ibid., 115

the definition to include the role of the laity. As this summary suggests, these five uses did not all emerge at the same time in the same way. Nevertheless, Wainwright employs them as five general rubrics to organize his own concrete and practical exposition of Christ's offices and work.

Wainwright then offers his own understanding of Christ's offices, starting with the prophetic (chap. 7), turning next to the priestly (chap. 8), and then considering the royal (chap. 9). He examines each office under five rubrics (the Christological, baptismal, soteriological, ministerial, and ecclesiological), as well as under a sixth rubric of his own, "the contemporary hermeneutic." His discussion of each office and rubric relies heavily on the exposition of pertinent verses from Scripture and, in a subsidiary manner, the Christian theological and liturgical tradition. As one might anticipate, the Christological use serves as the source and shaper of the uses following it (although the "soteriological use" seems at times to supplement the points made under the first rubric). In any case, the logic of Wainwright's exposition moves from a consideration of what God has accomplished through Christ's fulfillment of each office to the practical implications that work has for the Christian life, in its diverse stages and forms. Of course, a discussion of the practical implications of Christ's saving work could be virtually endless, and Wainwright's consideration of a sampling of topics seems somewhat *ad hoc*, but nevertheless evocative. These include such matters as the responsibility for Christian teaching, the role of prayer, who precisely and appropriately may be called a Christian "priest," the proper understanding of pastoral ministry and authority, and Christian unity, among other topics. Moreover, under the final rubric of chapters 7 through 9, "the contemporary hermeneutic," Wainwright indicates very briefly how Christ's fulfillment of each particular office serves to address a particular human question. In this move, he is following the suggestion of John Henry Newman, who made (but did not extensively develop) the observation that "these three offices seem to contain in them the three principal conditions of mankind,"³³ which Christ took upon Himself to redeem. Wainwright discusses this observation in terms relevant to a late modern audience, but seeks to remain true to Newman's basic insight. Especially to the human problems of meaninglessness, of alienation, and of power and authority, Wainwright sees Christ as

³³ Ibid., 120

offering, precisely through His three offices, the gifts of meaning, of reconciliation, and of true and perfect freedom.

Concerning the office, Berkouwer points out that the meaning of ‘office’ implies the fact that one fulfils a given mandate, and that it is not a self appointment, but a divine calling and assignment for a task. In the Old Testament, the commission was expressed by the anointing which qualified one to achieve a task. The efficaciousness of the given mandate did not depend on the human ability of the assigned person, but rather on the anointing which made the office ‘super personal’. The authority displayed in the office is divine, from above, which gives the office its solid foundation. “Every anointing is based on this sovereignty (Isa.45: 4, 5), also when it is accepted and acknowledged in faith and service. The anointing of prophets, priests, and kings reveals God’s dealings.”³⁴

In the same line of thought, Weber shows the important implication of Christ’s office as he says ‘Christ does not act on His own authority. He has a commission.’ Therefore, His work conforms to be official both for the Father and His people, not accidental or arbitrary, and also representative for the community of God. He is totally obedient to the commission of the Father. In this, we need to bear in mind that the threefold office of Christ for our salvation is a Trinitarian work, involving God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit.³⁵

In his study of Van Ruler’s theology of the kingdom, Janssen indicates the purpose of the commission of Christ in saying:

The appearance of sin, however, brought ruin to the good creation. History is more than a stage on which God works, but is established by God as the time in which the Messiah and the Spirit work to meet the reality of sin and to restore creation to its original intention.³⁶

For Van Ruler, the only way humans can enjoy the kingdom of God is by being saved, as the Messiah comes to atone for the sin of mankind. Though Van Ruler sees the coming of the Messiah as an ‘emergency measure’ and focusing on the goal, which is the saved,

³⁴ Berkouwer, 1965:63-65

³⁵ Weber, 1983:169

³⁶ Janssen, 2006:44

he does not neglect the aspect of the nature of the person of Christ, as he attributes the work of the kingdom of God not only to the Messiah, but to the Holy Spirit as well. He sees the Trinitarian God at work to meet created reality in multifarious ways.³⁷

It is noteworthy that in the Old Testament, the three offices of prophet, priest, and king were never united in one person. There were some in the Old Testament who functioned as both prophet and priest. Others functioned as both priest and king. But God never permitted any one person to hold all three offices. Berkouwer writes that though “the offices in the Old Testament were separated, we should not carry this separation through to Christ’s offices. That would mean that we were separating his three ‘offices’ from his person, who throughout the fulfilment of his office was the one Messiah, the one sent for the one task.” The unity of the threefold office is grounded on the unity of the person of Christ, as his person and his work are inseparably related. It is essential that the Person and the work of Christ be treated as a unity. When either aspect is stressed to the exclusion of the other, false views can arise. If, for example, exclusive stress is laid on the Work of Christ then there is the danger of a subjective view of His person. If, on the other hand, His person is seen in isolation from His work, then the result can be speculative view of His person, divorced from a real experience of His saving work. It is, rather, true to say that the one always leads to the other so that an understanding of His person throws light on what He has done, and an understanding of what He has done throws light on the nature of His person. Thus, the mediatorial work of Christ for our salvation involves the two natures of His person. For it to be efficaciously achieved, He has to be fully God and fully man.³⁸ However, the separation of each office in this study is only for practical purposes as we have already noted that Christ’s work of salvation in His threefold office is always undivided and unbreakable, as one aspect of His office qualifies the other.

What Christ has done relates to the nature of his person. The nature of His person is the foundation of understanding His work of salvation in returning everything to order and in restoring the fellowship between man and God, fellowship, which was broken by sin. This work of Christ is considered as a mediatorial work, bearing in mind that sin had

³⁷ Ibid., 35-36

³⁸ Ibid., 70

separated us from God. Therefore, according to Calvin, it necessitated only one that 'belonged to God' to serve as our intermediary, for there was none from the sons and daughters of Adam who could reach out to God. It required the Son of God to become 'Emmanuel'. In this Calvin says the Emmanuel had to assume the mediatorial task to restore us to the Grace of our God, to make us Children of God, and to save us in transferring us from hell to the Kingdom of Heaven. Calvin claims that there had to be an exchange between us and Christ. He had to become Son of man in order that we could become children of God. If we had to ask Calvin 'in which nature did He destroy death and sin?' he would say 'in His human and divine nature.' That is how He could appease the Father's righteous indignation, says Calvin. Christ came primarily, and mostly importantly, to be our Mediator.³⁹

Furthermore, Calvin, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* argues that the necessity of the redeemer in being true God and true man was to be able to obey God in our stead:

... Our Lord came forth as true man and took the person and name of Adam in order to take Adam's place in obeying the father, to present our flesh as the price of satisfaction to God's righteous judgment, and, in the same flesh, to pay the penalty that we deserved. In short, since neither as God alone could he feel death, nor as man alone could he overcome it, he coupled human nature with divine that to atone for the sin he might submit the weakness of the one to death; and that, wrestling with death by the power of the other nature, he might win victory for us. Those who despoil Christ of either his divinity or his humanity diminish his majesty and glory, or obscure his goodness. On the other hand, they do just as much wrong to men whose faith they thus weaken and overthrow, because it cannot stand unless it rests upon this foundation.⁴⁰

In this, Calvin attributes the value of Christ's atoning sacrifice to His being both divine and human. His obedience and atoning death are both dependent on who He is. Romanists hold the view that the mediatorial work of Christ was done only in His human nature as it is impossible for God to mediate between man and Himself. The extreme opposite view maintains that the mediatorial work of Christ was done only in His divine nature. But the Bible teaches that Christ as the Mediator was God-man.⁴¹ Calvin insists

³⁹ Kerr, 1989:72-73

⁴⁰ Calvin, Inst., 2.12.3, ed, McNeill

⁴¹ Hodge, 1860:354-355 (Outlines of Theology)

that:

... It was also imperative that he who was to become our redeemer be true God and true man. It was his task to swallow up death. Who but the life could do this? It was his task to conquer sin. Who but very Righteousness could do this? It was his task to rout the powers of the world and air. Who but a power higher than world and air could do this? Now where does life or righteousness or lordship and authority of heaven lie but with God alone? Therefore our most merciful God, when he willed that we be redeemed, made himself our redeemer in the person of his begotten Son (cf. Rom. 5: 8).⁴²

Speaking of the mediatorial work of Christ, Heppe asserts that the eternal Word became flesh, to 'be the mediator between sinful man and the righteous and holy God.'⁴³ Calvin, relating to the 'word became flesh,' taught that when we look at John 1: 14, we should not look at the Word changed to be flesh, nor are we to think that there was a confusion or mingling between the flesh and the Word. In essence, for Calvin, there was no 'confusion of substance but a unity of person.' Calvin saw the existence of man to be the best example through which he could explain what he admittedly perceived as a 'very great mystery.' That illustration is of the two substances of man. A man has a body and soul, he maintained. Yet these two distinct substances were non-confusedly a composite of one person.⁴⁴ So the incarnation is not human elevation or divine degradation, but rather divine condescension and coming into our human situation in a redemptive and decisive manner.⁴⁵

According to Heppe, there was an eternal pact between the Father and the Son, in which the Son had to become human for the execution of the mediatorial office. The Father anointed Him with the power of the Holy Spirit. Being God's anointed, the Christ, the Son, is the mediator between God and mankind.⁴⁶ He goes on to quote Cocceius, asserting:

Christ's anointing is either the commendation of the office, to which correspond the eternal promise and the demand for an inheritance; or the indwelling of the divine persona in the human nature for the purpose of executing the office; or the proof of the persona dwelling in the flesh and of

⁴² Calvin, Inst. 2.12.2,3, Ed. MacNeill

⁴³ Heppe, 1950:448

⁴⁴ Kerr, 1989: 73

⁴⁵ Bloesch, 1997:53

⁴⁶ Heppe, 1950:448

the kingdom given him — moreover, the kingly office is the consummation of offices and leans upon the priesthood and is carried by the word which Christ spoke as prophet. For these three offices he was anointed. Therefore (1) it was given to the Son to place many brethren to be filled with glory by the father; (2) for this reason it was given him to make salvation and to equip it unto righteousness; and (3) to announce the salvation unto righteousness which is in himself, unto obedience of faith. But because these were interconnected, they were given together.⁴⁷

The mediatorial work of Christ and the nature of His person are inseparable. We cannot speak of His person without speaking of His work, or speak of His work without speaking of His person. Our understanding of what He has done depends on the understanding of His nature. His nature was the qualifying factor for His mission; He had to be of divine nature and of human nature in order to fit as mediator between humankind and God. This is well explained in the answer Hodge gives to his question of how it can be proven that the Mediator acted in both divine and human natures. In this, Hodge answers:

1st. From the fact that the discharge of each of the three great functions of the mediatorial office, the prophetic, priestly, and kingly, involves the attributes of both natures.

2nd. From the fact that the Bible attributes all his acts as Mediator to one person, viewed as embracing both natures. The person is often designated by a term derived from the attributes of one nature, while the mediatorial action attributed to that person is plainly performed in virtue of the other nature embraced within it — see Acts 20: 28; 1 Corinthians 2 8; Hebrews 9: 14.

3rd. From the fact that he was Mediator from the foundation of the earth, it is clear that he was not Mediator in his humanity alone; and from the fact that the Eternal Word became incarnate, in order to prepare himself for the full discharge of his mediatorial work (Hebrews 2:17, 18), it is equally plain that he was not Mediator in his divine nature alone.⁴⁸

Charles Bell, in his book *Calvin and Scottish Theology*, wonderfully presents John Cambell's understanding on the nature of the work of Christ, which is founded on God who is love. In Jesus Christ there is twofold movement. There is a movement of God towards humanity in which God's love and forgiveness are revealed together with His

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Hodge, 1860: 355

judgment on sin. Simultaneously, there is also a responding movement towards God whereby Christ in our humanity offers a perfect vicarious response to the love and the judgment of God. We respond personally to this twofold movement through the Holy Spirit, who enables us to participate in Christ's own response made on our behalf. Christ's work is of no avail to us apart from participation in His person. In the incarnation Christ unites Himself with us by taking our humanity into union with Himself. In our humanity He repented, believed and died for us all. By the spirit we are united to Him to participate in His vicarious response which, in turn, is a response offered in our humanity.⁴⁹

2.4 OBJECTIONS TO THE THREEFOLD OFFICE OF CHRIST

In spite of the broad usage of the threefold office of Christ, this concept does not remain without criticism. Ritschl argues that the doctrine of the threefold office is inconsistent as Christ's kingship cannot be attributed to His state of humiliation, but rather, strictly in His state of exaltation. In Ritschl's view, only the prophetic and the priestly office of Christ is applicable to Christ's state of humiliation.⁵⁰ Pannenberg, on the other hand, objects to any application of the threefold office to the pre-Easter Jesus; he goes further to object that the offices of prophet and priest accurately apply to Jesus in the state of humiliation. In his argument, Christ in His state of humiliation did not hold the threefold office. After his examination of Scriptural passages (Isaiah 61: 1; Mathew 11: 2 - 6; Luke 7: 18 - 23; Luke 4: 16 - 30; Deuteronomy 18: 15; Acts 10: 38a and 4: 27, and Hebrews 1: 9) from which the anointing of Christ is used to justify the threefold office of Christ, he acknowledges the anointment of Christ by the Spirit, but he does not find any convincing proof to derive the threefold office from it; neither there is any clear convincing proof that Christ ascribed to Himself any of these offices. Therefore, to speak of the threefold office of Christ is a serious mistake. Pannenberg acknowledges only the prophetic office to have characterized the earthly work of Christ.⁵¹

Berkhof explains that the Lutheran Church opposition to the threefold office is summarized by Ernesti. He was of the opinion that the different offices were not clearly separated from each other, as is implied in the division, so that one title might justifiably

⁴⁹ Bell, 1985:185-197

⁵⁰ Ritschl, 1966:422-31

⁵¹ Pannenberg, 1968:212-225

cover all of them.⁵² Berkhof goes on to comment that Ritschl, too, objected that the priestly kingship vocation should be considered equally in the state of humiliation and in the state of exaltation. So, for Ritschl, the inconsistency of the formula of the threefold office was based on the fact that the kingly vocation belongs to Christ strictly in His state of exaltation, whereas the prophetic and priestly vocation belongs to his state of humiliation. It is probably fair at this stage to say that the threefold office doctrine formula represents more of the ‘both ... and’ continuum, while Ernesti and Ritschl represents the ‘either ... or’ continuum. It should not be surprising that orthodoxy, through its embrace of the threefold office, would experience an abundance of exegetical illuminations and amazing biblical analogies that transcend the limited realms of our Christological ‘either ... or’ continuum.⁵³ Jansen puts it well when he says, “The Jesus of Ritschl and Harnack was clad in prophetic garments but was stripped of his kingly and priestly vestments.”⁵⁴

Rieger, relating to the colonial world of the nineteenth century, conjectures that “... in a situation of empire Christ becomes part of the system to such a degree that little or no room exists for the pursuit of alternative realities of Christ. Empire displays strong tendencies to domesticate Christ and anything else that poses a challenge to its powers ...”⁵⁵ He goes on to say that the formula of the threefold office as it was advocated by Schleiermacher “proves to be ambivalent” as it “can provide resistance to empire in some cases; yet they might also need to be resisted and reframed in the struggle against empire in others.” According to Rieger, “the titles connected to the threefold office of Christ have often fostered empire and colonial attitudes. Asserting Christ’s power as king, for instance, has led to images of Christ’s kingship that resembled the political powers in control ... Since Christ’s power is easily adapted to the various forms of empire and colonialism, it takes a conscious effort to resist this tendency.”⁵⁶

In the context of Rieger, it is noteworthy to realize that Jesus could be misrepresented in order to fit in with the imperialistic political and economic desires of colonizing nations.

⁵² Berkhof 1959: 356- 357

⁵³ Berkhof, Ibid.

⁵⁴ Jansen, 1956:20

⁵⁵ Rieger, 2007:3

⁵⁶ Ibid., 2007:197-198

Throughout history we see that colonizers have invaded countries and stripped people of their religion and their culture ... every aspect of their being. Jesus did not ever take that route or endorse such actions. His words, however, have often been taken out of context to fit into certain ideologies. Whatever the objection of the threefold office of Christ might be, it remains the most comprehensive perspective or model of understanding the salvific mediatorial work of Christ.

2.5 CONTEMPORARY USES OF THE THREEFOLD OFFICE IN THEOLOGY

Jansen explains that the formula of threefold office owes its wide acclamation to John Calvin. Calvin's threefold office formula found its way into the convictions of theologians such as Brunner, Schleiermacher, Gerhard, Bavinck, Newman and transcended even into the ranks of Anglican, Lutheran and Catholic theology in spite of the hesitation among some Lutheran theologians, and in spite of the criticism of Ritschl, Enersti, and Pannenberg.⁵⁷

Wainwright goes on to write that while the threefold office was strongly used in the Reformed Orthodoxy of the seventeenth century, in the eighteenth century it was not much in use until later, when the threefold office of Christ made its way back in prevailing schools of theology and later on in Reformed tradition.⁵⁸

In Wainwright's study of the use of the threefold office formula throughout the history of Christian theology, he has recorded some of the major figures who are regarded as the contemporary or modern theologians to have used the threefold office, and some Christian denominations that have adopted it. In what follows, we will look at Wainwright's informative discussion in regard to contemporary use of the threefold office of Christ:

- Emil Brunner

Wainwright shows that in the twentieth century, Brunner has made use of the threefold office in his "Dogmatics." For Brunner, access to the person of Christ can only be

⁵⁷ Jansen, 1956:16-36.

⁵⁸ Wainwright, 1997: 101

possible through His work, though he asserts that the person and the work of Christ the Mediator must not be separated.⁵⁹

- Karl Barth

For Karl Barth, 'Jesus Christ, the Lord as Servant' represents the priestly office; 'Jesus Christ, the Servant as Lord' is the kingly office; finally, 'Jesus Christ the witness' or 'the Guarantor' is the prophetic office.⁶⁰

Modern theology has typically seen the prophetic office as pointing to "Jesus as the supreme teacher and example of perfect divine and human love." But for Barth this falls far short of the power of the gospel. Teacher and example light up the darkness but do not at the same time overcome and cast off the power of sin. When seen in the full blaze of the gospel, the prophetic office confesses, "he [Jesus Christ] who is himself the material Content of the atonement, the mediator of it, stands securely with man as well as God that it is our atonement, he himself being the form of it as the content."⁶¹

- Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church has adopted Calvin's concept of the three offices of Christ as we see it explicitly mentioned in Roman catechism:

Jesus Christ was the supreme Prophet and Teacher, from whom we have learned the will of God, and by whom the world has been taught the will of God, and by whom the world has been taught of the knowledge of the heavenly Father.

Christ was also a Priest, not indeed of the same order as were the priests of the tribe of Levi in the Old Law, but of that of which the prophet David sang: "thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek" [Ps.110 :4]. This subject the apostle fully and accurately develops in his epistle to the Hebrews (5 - 7).

Christ not only as God, but also as man, partaker of our nature, we likewise acknowledge to be a king. Of him the angel testified, "He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1: 33). This kingdom of Christ is spiritual and eternal, begun on earth but

⁵⁹ Ibid., 102

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

perfected in heaven. He discharges by his admirable providence the duties of King towards his Church, governing and protecting her against the open violence and hidden designs of her enemies, legislating for her and imparting to her not only holiness and righteousness, but also power and strength to persevere ... To him God delivered the government of the whole world and to this sovereignty of his, which has already begun, all things, shall be made fully and entirely subject on the day of judgment.⁶²

Wainwright goes on to say that at the second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church's use of the *munus triplex* of Christ was more effective. So, the use of *munus triplex* in the 1992 universal Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

Jesus fulfilled the messianic hope of Israel in his threefold office of priest, prophet, and king ... Jesus Christ is the one whom the father anointed with the Holy Spirit and established as priest, prophet, and king. The whole people of God participate in these three offices of Christ and bear the responsibilities for mission and service that flow from them ... In the Church, Christ has entrusted to the apostles and their successors the office of teaching, sanctifying, and governing in his name and by his power.⁶³

The Roman Catholic perspective of the threefold office of Christ is more decisive than the Protestant one. The Roman Catholic approach moves in the direction of empowering the laity to carry on and share in the three offices. Obviously, this empowering is not contrary to Protestant understanding either. The Protestants did not stress this before, although Schleiermacher's explanation of the kingly office shows that Christ as king gives His gifts to the laity: "The kingly office of Christ consists in the fact that everything which the community of believers requires for its well-being continually proceeds from him."⁶⁴

- John Wesley

Wainwright notes that while Wesley may have referred explicitly to the *munus triplex* a

⁶² Ibid., 106

⁶³ Ibid. 106-107. In spite of the fact that Roman Catholic has adopted Calvin's formula of the threefold office of Christ, there is some absurdity in the manner the threefold office is conceived. In the book 'FAITH for TODAY: The Teachings of Pope John Paul II', we see that the mediatorial work of Christ is deprived of the divine nature. Although it is acknowledged by Pope John II that the revelation received by Peter in Matthew 16:16 is the affirmation that Jesus was both God and man in 'hypostatic union' (see pg. 89-92), Pope John Paul II teaches that Christ as prophet, priest, and king fulfils his mission in human nature (see pg. 94). Thus, his mission in the threefold office was to "reveal human beings to themselves: 1. by showing human beings their proper identity (prophetic office); 2. by showing human beings their proper activity (priestly office); 3. by showing human beings that they are called to love God through a mutual bodily exchange of love and to love others by using things for their benefit (kingly office) (see pg. 94).

⁶⁴ Ibid., 107

scant ten times in his voluminous writings, “the substance of the three offices is heavily present in Wesley.” An important work in Wesleyan theology, John Deschner’s *Wesley’s Christology: An Interpretation* uses the threefold office as the hermeneutic key to this part of Wesley’s thought. The two uses that Wainwright quotes are both highly informative. The first is from Wesley’s “Letter to a Roman Catholic,” wherein Wesley explains how a true Protestant believes, taking into account the Nicene Creed:

I believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Saviour of the world, the Messiah so long foretold; that, being anointed by the Holy Ghost, he was a Prophet, revealing to us the whole will of God; that he was a Priest, who gave himself as a sacrifice for sin, and still makes intercession for transgressors; that he is a king, who has power in heaven and in earth, and will reign till he has subdued all things to himself.⁶⁵

The second reference comes from Wesley’s explanatory notes upon the New Testament, expounding Matthew 1: 16:

The word Christ in Greek, and Messiah in Hebrew, signify “Anointed”; and imply the prophetic, priestly, and royal characters which were to meet in the Messiah. Among the Jews, anointing was the ceremony whereby prophets and kings were initiated into those offices. And if we look into ourselves, we shall find a want of Christ in all these respects. We are by nature at a distance from God, alienated from him, and incapable of a free access to him. Hence we want a Mediator, and Intercessor; in a word, a Christ in his priestly office. This regards our state with respect to God. And with respect to ourselves, we find a total darkness, blindness, and ignorance of God and the things of God. Now here we want Christ in his prophetic office, to enlighten our minds, and teach us the whole will of God. We find also within us a strange misrule of appetites and passions. For these we want Christ in his royal character, to reign in our hearts, and subdue all things to himself.⁶⁶

2.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have attempted to investigate the background, some characteristic features, and the purpose of the threefold office of Jesus Christ. We can summarize the important discoveries as follows:

1. We have seen that the threefold office of Christ is a comprehensive way of

⁶⁵ Ibid., 108

⁶⁶ Ibid.

approaching the mediatorial work of Christ in a well organized and systematized manner for a proper understanding of what Christ has done for our salvation. We have pointed out that the understanding of His nature is foundational for what He has done. Though his work has revealed to us who He is, His nature determines His work for our salvation as we have seen that He was incarnated to accomplish the mission of our salvation from sins and its consequences. He was not incarnated in the world just for our salvation; the salvation was the means to the end which is reconciliation and restoration accomplished by His mediatorial work. As the Mediator, He stood between God and mankind to bring us together in restoring the fellowship broken by sin. Man's fall has led all humanity in ignorance, guilt and enslavement to Sin and to Satan. Because of this God was offended; but through His love for humanity He sent His only begotten Son to mediate between us and Him.

We have also noted that in regard to the consequence of sin, which led mankind to guilt, ignorance, blindness, alienation from God and enslavement to sin and to the Devil, the Mediator had to assume the office of prophet to reveal to human beings the will of God and teach them the ways of God to enlighten people from the darkness of their ignorance and make them recover their sight from blindness; He had to be Priest in satisfying the requirement of the law by His obedience unto death, by interceding for our forgiveness, and by dying vicariously to satisfy God's justice, and in removing our guilt by His blood and in reconciling us to God; and the mediator had to be King to break the power of Satan and set mankind free from enslavement of Sin and of the Devil. In these three offices Jesus Christ has fulfilled all the anointed offices of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the three offices were separate; in Christ they are united.

2. The threefold office of Christ derives from the title Christ and its usage in the Old Testament, i.e. Christ means 'the Anointed', or 'one appointed officially by God', for in the theocratic society of Israel three offices have been anointed and appointed to mediate between God and the people, i.e. prophet, priest, and king. In Luke 4: 18 - 21, we see Jesus quotes Isaiah 61 which prophesied the coming of the Anointed. Jesus as the Anointed performed all three offices with perfect achievement. We have seen that the historical development of the three offices of Christ that of prophet, priest, and king has been traced from Jewish sources, and found in the work of Eusebius already in the fourth

century. And Osiander explicitly made use of it. The seed was slowly growing until the time of the Reformation, when John Calvin brought the *munus triplex* into Dogmatics. In spite of the criticism of some theologians the influence of *munus triplex* has made its use accessible to Roman Catholic, to Lutheran theologians, to Presbyterian, and also to the Methodist Church.

3. The threefold office is distinguishable but inseparable. The work of Christ cannot be separated into three independent offices; although some theologians separate the three offices chronologically in the state of humiliation and in the state of exaltation. Personally, this writer agrees with the view that takes the use of the three offices of Christ simultaneously and continuously in His humiliation state as in His exalted state.

Strictly speaking, there is only one office - that of Mediator; but the Mediator in that office discharges three functions. However, as the Catechisms use the term 'office' in the sense of 'function' in this threefold way, it will doubtless be best to follow this familiar usage in the explanations now to be given. The brief statement of the Catechisms is that Jesus Christ, as the Mediator between God and man, and the Redeemer of His people, exercises under all dispensations three offices, that of prophet, that of priest, and that of king. These three offices He occupies, and fulfils their duties both in His estate of humiliation and exaltation. Without further preliminary remark the explanation of these offices is entered upon.

3. THE MESSIANIC PROPHETIC OFFICE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, we have attempted to discuss the general aspect of the threefold office of Christ. In these three following chapters, we will respectively pay attention to each of the three offices. We have already pointed out that the threefold office of Christ cannot be divided. But for the sake of practicality, it is worthwhile explaining each office separately. Thus, in this chapter, our focus will be on the prophetic office; in chapter four, the priestly office will be discussed; finally, in chapter five, we will discuss the kingly office.

The writer of the book of Hebrews (1: 2) states that “in these last days (God) has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things.” In the presence of Moses and Elijah, the Father's voice redounded relative to Jesus, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him" (Matthew 17: 5). It was foretold that a prophet would arise comparable to Moses (Deuteronomy 18: 18, 19). The apostle Peter revealed that anticipated prophet to be Christ (Acts 3: 22, 23). Regarding Christ as prophet he stated, "... Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people" (Acts 3: 22, 23). Jesus met all the requirements of such a prophet (Deuteronomy 18: 15, 18 - 19).

The basic aim in this chapter is to investigate the meaning of the prophetic office of Christ for our salvation. Thus we will start by defining the word prophet, and then proceed in revising briefly the function of a prophet in Old Testament. We will also attempt to study the meaning of Deuteronomy 18: 15, 18 as this passage was foundational in expecting a prophet in the likeness of Moses. Finally, we will study the function of Christ's prophetic office and its contemporary use.

3.2 BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF PROPHETIC OFFICE

In this section of the original meaning of the messianic prophetic office, we will limit our discussion on the original meaning in the Biblical texts and in Christian tradition.

a. Definition of the word Prophet

The word Prophet is viewed differently by different people. Most people consider a prophet as one who predicts the future. In the Bible the prophet plays a much bigger role than just predicting the future. Louis Berkhof states:

The Old Testament uses three words to designate a prophet, namely, nabhi, ro'eh, and chozeh. The radical meaning of the word nabbhi is uncertain, but it is evident from such passages as Ex. 7: 1 and Deut. 18: 18 that the word designates one who comes with the message from God to the people. The word ro'el and chozeh stress the fact that the prophet is one who receives revelations from God, particularly in the form of visions. These words are used interchangeably. Other designations are "man of God", "messenger of the Lord", and "watchman". These appellatives indicate that the prophets are in the special service of the Lord, and watch for spiritual interests of the people.¹

In the Expository Dictionary of Bible Words (2005: 765), the word 'prophet' in the Old Testament is attributed to the people who were called, commissioned, enlightened and equipped by God to reveal His plan and His purposes to His people and to the entire world by speaking forth to them; in fact the prophet was God's spokesman.

In Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (1985: 493), the word 'prophet' is explicitly defined as:

"One who speaks forth or openly", "a proclaimer of a divine message,".. In the Sept. it is the translation of the rôeh, "a seer"; 1 Sam.9: 9, indicating that the "prophet" was one who had immediate intercourse with God. It also translates the word nābhi, meaning "either one in whom the message from God springs forth" or "one to whom anything is secretly communicated." Hence, in general, "the prophet" was one upon whom the Spirit of God rested, Num. 11: 17 - 29, one to whom and through whom God speaks, Num. 12: 2; Amos 3: 7, 8. In the case of the OT prophets their messages were very largely the proclamation of the divine purposes of salvation and glory to be accomplished in the future.

In the light of the above definition, the 'prophet' is a person who proclaimed the divine message given to him in visions or dreams (Numbers 12: 6, 8). Hence, a prophet was the mouthpiece of God, speaking forth to humans in the name of God and with divine

¹ Berkhof 1949:357-358

authority (Exodus 7: 1). He was the instrument through which God spoke to mankind (Jeremiah 1: 9; Isaiah 51: 16), thus what the prophet spoke was not a message formulated by his own will or cleverness, but rather a message given directly from God (2 Peter 1: 20, 21). The prophetic office is a supernatural ministry with divine power. A prophet was the immediate instrument of God to transmit God's plan of salvation to mankind (Deuteronomy 18: 18, 19). In this context the written word should be regarded as prophetic as it came under the divine inspiration (1 Timothy 3: 16). In short, the Old Testament prophets were mediators standing between God and men; they were called to expound the Law, proclaim God's plan of salvation, and finally, foretell the future.

Thus, Christ assumes the function of a prophet by revealing God to mankind and by speaking forth His word. So, it is evident that Christ exercised the office of prophet from the fact that Moses predicted that one day God would send a prophet like himself, a prediction which is clearly about Jesus Christ (Deuteronomy 18: 15 - 18). Peter goes on to apply Moses' prediction of the coming prophet like him to Jesus (Acts 3: 22 - 24). Also, Jesus claimed to speak forth revelation from God the Father (John 8: 26 - 28; 12: 49, 50; 14: 10, 24; 15: 15) and spoke of himself as a prophet (Luke 13: 33). Grudem states that "Jesus was not merely a messenger of revelation from God, but was himself the source of revelation from God. Rather than saying, as all the Old Testament prophet did, 'Thus says the Lord,' Jesus could begin divinely authoritative teaching with the amazing statement, 'But I say unto you' (Matthew 5: 22)."²

Although Grudem is right in his statement, it is noteworthy to realize that the authority of Jesus' teaching vindicates His nature and the relation He has with God the Father. Jesus Himself acknowledged that He did not speak of His own accord, He clearly claimed that God the Father commanded Him what to say and how to say it (John 12: 49 - 50). Jesus goes on to claim that all authority has been given to Him (Matthew 28: 18). Therefore, it is clear that all true prophets have to be inspired, empowered and authorized by God. So, the greatness of Christ's prophetic office has nothing to do with the formula of His speech, but rather the nature of His person and the relation He has with the Father. Baker is right to point out that the Sonship of Jesus is central in His teaching and His work. The

² Grudem, 1994: 624-626

Sonship of Jesus is “the basis of his authority in all he says and does, and this note of authority is one of the hallmarks of his ministry. Without this, we do not recognize Jesus — indeed, he is not himself. The power of the words and deeds comes from him (the Father).”³

b. The function of Old Testament prophets

Fee and Stuart in the book *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (1981:184-188) highlight four points which characterize the role and the function of the prophets in the Old Testament:

- “The prophets were covenant enforcement mediators.”

The message of the prophets reflected the Deuteronomistic covenant on which ground the relationship between Israelites and God was based. The covenant mediated by Moses demanded fidelity and obedience from Israelites as a condition to prosperity (Leviticus 26: 1 - 13; Deuteronomy 4: 32 – 40; 28: 14); these blessings had to last as long as Israel remained faithful to the covenant. In case of failure to comply with God’s law stipulated in the covenant, curses were their fate (Leviticus 26: 14 - 39; Deuteronomy 4: 15- 28, 28: 15 - 68). “God’s covenant with Israel, therefore, contains not only regulations and statutes for them to keep but describes the sorts of sanctions that accompany the Law.” In fact, the prophets were covenant administrators. The prophetic office in the Old Testament can only be understood in the perspective of the Mosaic covenant; the prophets were reminding Israel of its redemptive history and the covenant stipulations and sanctions. The message delivered by the prophets was God’s message through which God revealed his intention to enforce the covenant for blessings or curses, depending on Israel’s response.

- “The prophets’ message was not their own, but God’s message.”

The prophets were charismatic figures, “the Hebrew word for prophet (nābī’) comes in fact from the Semitic verb ‘to call’ (nabū)”, hence the prophets were called and

³ . Baker 1980:119

commissioned by God to speak on His behalf to Israel (cf. Exodus 3-4; Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1; Ezekiel 1-3; Hosea 1:2; Amos 7:14-15; Jonah 1:1; et al).” They were believed to be endowed with the divine gift of receiving and communicating the message revealed from God. Thus, what the prophets proclaimed was not of man, but of God, and was confirmed by “Thus says the Lord.” The word was God’s Word proclaimed on God’s authority. The prophets were conscious of being possessed by God to speak forth God’s word. The prophet Micah declares: “But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord and with justice and might to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin” (Micah 3:8). In spite of the fact that the prophets were the mouthpiece of God and the instrument through which divine revelation was announced, the prophets kept their personality, and their personalities were active in communicating the revelation of God.⁴

- “The prophets were God’s direct representatives.”

The prophets were not an end in themselves; they were simply the means through which God revealed His will and His plans to Israel and to the nations. “They were like ambassadors from the heavenly court who relayed the divine sovereign’s will to the people. The prophets were, on their own, neither radical social reformers nor innovative religious thinkers. The social reforms and the religious thought that God wished to impart to the people had already been revealed in the covenantal law.”⁵

- “The prophets’ message is unoriginal.”

“The prophets were inspired by God to present to their generation the essential content of the original Mosaic covenant’s warnings and promises (curses and blessings). Therefore, when we read the prophets’ words, what we read is not new in concept but a new wording — in each prophet’s own style and vocabulary — of the same in essence delivered by God originally through Moses.”⁶

The prophets, as the mouthpieces of God, addressed the people in revealing to them God’s plan of salvation, in admonishing them, in calling them to repentance and

⁴ Fee and Stuart 1981:186

⁵ Ibid.,187

⁶ Ibid.

faithfulness to the Mosaic covenant; they emphasized monotheism, morality, and the messianic new era. In the context of showing how the prophets were conservative of the Mosaic covenant without announcing any doctrines that were not already mentioned in Pentateuchal covenant, Fee gives the example of the way Hosea used the Commandments:

Hosea does not cite the Ten Commandments verbatim. He mentions five of them in a one-word summary fashion much as Jesus does in Mark 10:19 (cf. Matt 18: 18 - 19; Luke 18: 20). But mentioning five of them, even out of their usual order, is a very effective way of communicating to the Israelites that they have broken the Ten Commandments ...”⁷

Concerning the messianic prophecies, it is very interesting to see Fee originating the messianic prophecies in Mosaic Law, unlike some others who have attributed the messianic prophecies to some later prophets as something new to their prophetic ministry. For Fee, these prophecies were not new at all, in spite of the expansion of it in the Servant Songs of Isaiah 42; 49; 50; 53 in which Isaiah gives much detail of the Messiah’s life and role. The Mosaic Law was the base from which the messianic prophecies originated. This is proven by the fact that Jesus himself in Luke 24: 44 sees His life as the fulfilment of what had been written “in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Furthermore, the Apostle John in John 1: 45 writes that the Mosaic Law has spoken of Jesus.

Thus, concerning the role and function of the prophets in the Old Testament, we can draw the following conclusions:

In the first place, the prophets stood in a special relationship with the Lord, the Almighty. They were called into service by God with the task to speak (forth-telling and fore-telling) on behalf of God to the nation and its leaders.

Second, the prophets stood in special relation to the Torah, the covenant that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai. Thus the task of forth-telling meant that the prophet was enabled by God to spell out the meaning and the implications of the covenant for each

⁷ Ibid., 188

successive generation of Israelites. As such, they called Israel to live in the light of God's covenant, promising blessing and life if they did, but judgment and exile if they refused. Likewise, as in the face of the Israel's stubborn refusal to listen, the prophets began to foretell something new and wonderful that God would do in the future. They expressed this promise in terms of what God had done in the past. Thus they spoke of the new covenant, a new exodus, a New Jerusalem with a new temple and even a new creation.

Third, the prophets stood in a special relationship to the people of Israel (Northern and Southern kingdoms). But this did not exclude them from speaking for God to the nations outside of Israel.

Finally, the content of the prophetic message included everything which related to the making known of God's purpose – past, present and future. No aspect of Israel's life was excluded. This is because of the all-embracing nature of the Torah. However, it is fair to say that the prophets focused on the following areas:

True knowledge and pure service of God; a religious – moral dimension

True love and selfless service of others; a social – ethical dimension

True trust and confidence in God; a political – theological dimension

c. The Background of Deuteronomy 18: 15, 18: A Prophet Like Moses

The interpretation of this passage has been a subject of debate and contradiction among scholars. Brown explains that 'a prophet like Moses' did not refer to prophecy in general but to a particular prophet. He referred to its Jewish interpretation, and its interpretation by the Qumran community and by the Samaritans to substantiate his view.⁸ Mayes proposed that Deuteronomy 18:15 is a general reflection on the history and significance of prophecy in Israel, in which the prophets are understood in relation to Moses and legitimated through connection of their proclamation with the law given through him. He maintains that it is not an indication of the existence of a prophetic office as covenant mediator and that the messianic interpretation of this passage, referring it to a single

⁸ Brown 1993:188

individual, arose in later Judaism and was the accepted interpretation in New Testament times.⁹

McConville states that 'a prophet like Moses' was contrasted with the vivid pictures of the practices of the other nations. Therefore the 'raising up' of the prophet needs not indicate a single act, and this act of 'raising up by God' happened many times in Israel's history.¹⁰ Craigie saw its primary importance for the prophets who succeeded Moses. Their function was to declare the words of God. These scholars saw the concept of 'a prophet like Moses' as the example of the prophetic office, which were distinguished from the prophets of the other nations.¹¹

Van Groningen presents five answers which have been given as the interpretation to the identity of a prophet referred to by Moses:

Firstly, some writers have based their arguments from the New Testament references (Acts 3: 22; 7:32; Hebrews 1: 1 - 2) to identify Christ as the prophet referred to by Moses. According to Van Groningen "This assertion, however, does not take the context seriously and fails to consider Israel's need for a prophetic mediator in Canaan." Secondly, in Van Groningen's view, "Scholars, considering the context, that is, the warning against false prophets and pseudoprophetic activities, find the reference to be to the prophets who were to be raised up in Israel." Thirdly, Van Groningen quotes Ernest Hengstenberg, who states the passage is to be referred to Christ primarily, then to the prophets secondarily. Fourthly, Van Groningen points to Meredith Kline who, following John Calvin, considered the reference to be twofold: To both the prophetic line and Christ the Messiah. Fifthly and finally, Groningen agrees with the interpretation that "The prophetic institution is spoken of directly as an institution which would culminate in Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah."¹²

Williamson in *Westminster Confession of Faith* points out that "Moses was the first to be designated a prophet with that prominence that we usually associate with the term. And

⁹ Mayes 1987:282

¹⁰ McConville 2002:302-303

¹¹ Craigie 1976:262

¹² Van Groningen 1990:252

in Deuteronomy 18:15 - 20 God promised that there would follow a succession of prophets, until at last a supreme prophet (like unto Moses) would be raised up whose words would have final authority.”¹³ Thus, according to Clement, most critical scholars believe that the original context of a prophet like Moses in Deuteronomy envisages a succession of future Old Testament prophets.¹⁴

Nevertheless, in spite of some scholars’ view that Deuteronomy 18: 15 - 20 refers to a plurality of prophets, the passage does speak of the coming of a Moses-like “prophet” in the singular; this passage would naturally be seen as pointing to an eschatological role for a Moses-like figure.¹⁵

It is clear that Deuteronomy 34: 10 cited Deuteronomy 18: 15, 18. It means that 'the prophet like Moses', promised in Deuteronomy 18: 15, 18 is the same person who has not yet come. If Deuteronomy 18: 15, 18 was not a promise, but only an example of the prophetic institution, there was no need to mention it again in Deuteronomy 34: 10. McConville however, considers it not as the incompleteness of the promise, but as an affirmation of Moses' incomparability as a prophet.¹⁶ Nelson suggests that prophets like Moses would appear, but none would have Moses' unmediated access to Yahweh's presence.¹⁷ According to Craigie, the unique aspect of Moses' prophetic ministry is the Exodus event. It was with the New Covenant that at last a Prophet like Moses appeared again. But he was more than a prophet, and the coming prophet was the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who brought with Him the liberation of the new exodus. Therefore 'a prophet like Moses' was regarded as the promised Messiah at least at the end of Deuteronomy.¹⁸ As Sailhamer supposes, “There was still a prophet yet to come. In other words, the author who gave us the final ending of the Pentateuch understands the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 18 exactly as they were understood by the NT authors. That 'Prophet like Moses' was the expected Messiah - and he had not yet come.”¹⁹ Scholars emphasized that Moses was himself a great prophet, and the example of a prophet; he

¹³ Williamson 1964:70

¹⁴ Clement 1968:24

¹⁵ Kaiser 1995: 57-61; Allison 1993:73-84

¹⁶ McConville 2002:477

¹⁷ Nelson 2002:393

¹⁸ Craigie 1976:402

¹⁹ Sailhamer 2001:18

was also a king (royal function), a priest, sage, and a judge.²⁰

"God will raise up for you a Prophet" (Deuteronomy 18: 15) is God's promise that He will select a prophet in future. These were a lot of expectations in the New Testament era about the special prophet. But in the Old Testament era the different offices were instituted to guide the nation in their promised land. The viewpoints of the New Testament and Judaism differ among Old Testament scholars, because their interpretations of the texts differ. Old Testament scholars intend to find meaning in the texts itself, but the New Testament authors and Judaic authors expect the special prophet in the history of redemption. There are two different contexts in approaching Deuteronomy 18: 15,18: The Old Testament context sees the role of 'a prophet like Moses' in Deuteronomy as the example for the institution of the prophetic office in Israel; the New Testament context sees it as the promise of the coming special prophet who is greater than Moses in the history of redemption.

Moses occupies a place of pre-eminent importance in Jewish minds. Jews are still looking back with reverence to Moses, their great prophet, who for them was a unique leader with outstanding qualities as prophet, priest, teacher, judge, saviour, lawgiver, and leader with royal function. None of the other prophets or leaders could be compared to Moses for his multiple roles. At the same time, they are looking forward to the arrival of the Messiah in the likeness of Moses. Moses was a prophet who delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, he had proclaimed the word of the Lord from Sinai, and promulgated the law of God. He is the only prophet known in the Old Testament to have spoken with God face to face. God had never raised up a prophet like Moses, until the arrival of Jesus²¹

d. A Prophet as a Messianic expectation

The most explicit Messianic prophecy found in the Pentateuch is the one that Moses has promised his people, that one day God will raise up a prophet like him (Deuteronomy

²⁰ Eichrodt 1961:289

²¹ Erickson 1983:765

18:15,18). It is very important to consider the significance of this prophecy as it is the only place in the entire Pentateuch where Moses explicitly identifies himself as a prophet, and foresaw the arrival of the Messiah as a prophet in his likeness. This prediction has alerted Jewish expectation of the coming Messiah. The prophet like Moses is perceived to be the Messiah. Helmut Thielicke, in his book *The Evangelical Faith*, explains the fact that in the Qumran texts the Essene community was expecting primarily the prophet like Moses.²² Thompson goes on to explain that the ‘speculation about the eschatological prophet is something characteristic of the inter-testamental period. Apparently it goes back to Deuteronomy and circles influenced by that work: “A prophet like me (Moses) will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from among your own kinsmen; to him you shall listen (Deuteronomy 18: 15; cf. 30:1 - 3; Exodus. 23: 20 - 22).”²³ “Originally this was not connected with the expectation of an Elijah *redivivus*. His expectation was a later addition to this tradition (cf. Mal. 3: 1, 23; Sir. 48: 1 - 14). Eventually, in Jewish circles, Elijah came to be seen as a forerunner of the final prophet (namely, in Qumran), and the New Testament seems to reflect this in calling the Baptist this Elijah *redivivus* (cf. Mt 3: 1 - 17; 17: 9 - 13), since he precedes Jesus.”²⁴

Cullmann shows that ‘the prophet’ is one among the Christological titles which refer to the earthly work of Jesus.²⁵ According to Cullmann, there were two prophets who were expected to return, namely Moses and Elijah. The return of Enoch is also occasionally mentioned with them, due to the fact that they did not die but ascended to heaven. The prophetic title of Christ changed in the Early Church, and was combined with other thoughts like the Logos.²⁶ Teeple also compares the Mosaic eschatological prophet of Judaism to that of early Christianity. He shows that the Mosaic eschatological Prophet in early Christianity refers to the Messiah.²⁷ Glasson goes on to point out that in the rabbinic writings, Moses was referred to as the first deliverer, with the Messiah being the second deliverer. Moses was a type of Jesus, and Elijah was the forerunner of John the Baptist.²⁸

²² Thielicke 1977:347

²³ Thompson 1985:213

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Cullmann 1975:17

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Teeple 1957:1

²⁸ Glasson 1963:27

Sabourin in considering the prophetic title of Christ explains that the prophetic title of Christ does not refer to a general prophet, but to the unique eschatological prophet as the Messiah.²⁹ Hahn in studying the concept of the eschatological prophet in late rabbinical literature and in the postexilic history, states that there are many Christological titles, each of which points to one aspect of Christ's ministry, or that of the new Moses Christology having multiple characters because of the various functions that Moses fulfilled as king, prophet, judge, and priest.³⁰

The dispensation of Mosaic prophethood was far different from all other prophets of the Old Testament, as we read in Numbers 12: 6 - 8 where God speaks about Moses: "When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord."³¹

In the light of this, it seems judiciously logical to study the original meaning of the prophetic office of Christ from the perspective of the prophetic office of Moses. It is also noteworthy to consider that all the OT prophets after Moses have much to contribute in understanding the origin of the prophetic office of Christ.

e. Context of the prophetic calling of Moses

Exodus 1 - 4 presents to us the context and the manner of the calling of Moses to prophetic office. In the account of the calling of Moses, the saving nature of God is fully revealed, as we see him concerned about the suffering of his people. In his concern he decides to choose Moses to be the agent through whom he will save his people. Moses seems to have had some sense of justice and righteousness in his spirit, which was displayed in his youth before he received the divine calling, as we can see in Exodus 2: 11 - 17; Hebrews 11: 24 - 26. His divine calling started with a vision of God in the

²⁹ Sabourin 1967:45-51

³⁰ Hahn 1969:372-373

³¹ Thompson 1985: 113

burning bush, in which vision he was commissioned to deliver God's people from Pharaoh's slavery in Egypt and lead them to the Promised Land. But Moses responds reluctantly, wondering how he can convince the Israelites that it is really God who has sent him: "Who am I that I would go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (3: 11).

Moses' mission was not simply to go to Pharaoh but included the proclamation of the Good News of deliverance to the people of Israel. Moses has to announce to the elders of Israel that God has revealed Himself to him, being concerned for their misery in Egypt, and that He was about to deliver them from Egypt to the promised land. God assured Moses that his mission of proclaiming God's word will be successful as people will listen to him (Exodus 3:18).

The response of listening to the prophet is crucial not only in the case of Israel and Moses; it is the standard for appropriately responding to all of God's prophets. It is an intriguing standard that requires careful consideration. Houtman explains listening to the prophet in Exodus 3: 18 in the context of Obedience, as he states: "Obviously there is more here than a mere formal listening; it assumed that the elders, on the ground of Moses' words, trust him and acknowledge him as Yahweh's envoy, and therefore are prepared to carry out his orders. The elders must obediently listen."³²

f. Some factors relating the prophetic office of Moses to that of Christ

The circumstances that led God to call Moses to his prophetic office are painted in Exodus 2: 23 to 3: 10. The uniqueness and the greatness of Moses above all the other OT's prophets has to do with the fact that he was a leader, a mediator of the first Covenant, a Lawgiver, a saviour, a teacher, a priest, and a prophet. He was ready to die for the sake of his people. In fact, God made him God of Pharaoh.

1. Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant. He mediated between God and the Israelites (Deuteronomy 5: 5), and suffered on behalf of Israelites (Deuteronomy 1: 37; 4:

³² Houtman 1993:372

21 - 22). So, the final prophet like Moses takes on the characteristic of Moses, as He (Jesus) is the Mediator between God and all humankind, as the apostle Paul wrote: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men" (1 Timothy 2: 5,6). He is "the suffering servant" of Isaiah who bears resemblances to this prophetic Moses. (Is. 42: 1 - 4; 49: 1 - 6; 50: 4 - 11; 52: 13 to 53: 12)" ³³

2. Moses was the lawgiver; none of the other Old Testament prophets was the lawgiver. Instead, all called the Israelites back to faithfulness in the Mosaic covenant. Dozeman explains the fact that Moses is presented from Exodus to Deuteronomy as having a delegated authority to give the law to Israel. Moses had two sources of that delegated authority, Yahweh and Israel. On the one hand, Yahweh commissioned Moses' to hear and report the law (Deuteronomy 4: 14, 5: 28 - 31, 18: 15 - 18; cf. Exodus 19: 9); on the other hand, the people asked Moses to mediate between themselves and God (Deuteronomy 5: 23 - 27; cf. Exodus 20: 18 - 20).³⁴

The arrival of Jesus' prophetic ministry was so obvious to people, and in attempting to analyze it with the background of Deuteronomy 18: 15, we see that Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but instead to expound it and make sense of it to people. Jesus did not just expound the Mosaic Law but was, as well as Moses, the lawgiver (Galatians 6: 2). The Sermon on the Mount is an indication for the law of Christ. Seccombe in his book *The King of God's Kingdom* writes that consideration of the Sermon on the Mount as the new Law of Christ is one of the views widely held, and that "The scene of the Sermon may be reminiscent of Moses receiving the law on Mt Sinai and descending to deliver it to the people."³⁵

3. Moses was a faithful prophet, precise and diligent in the office to which God called him. But Jesus Christ excelled also in faithfulness. "Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house testifying to what would be said in the future. But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope

³³ Thompson 1985: 213-253

³⁴ Dozeman 1989:54

³⁵ Seccombe 2002:251ff.

of which we boast” (Hebrews 3: 5 - 6).

4. Moses in his prophetic office has played the important role of a teacher. Blenkinsopp points to the book of Deuteronomy, saying that “Moses is presented as teacher and Scribe; as such, he not only enunciates the laws but provides motivation for their observance.”³⁶

Calvin in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* interprets Christ’s prophetic function, primarily in the teaching office. In pointing to Isaiah 61: 1 - 2, Luke 4: 18, Calvin states:

We see that he was anointed by the Spirit to be herald and witness of the Father’s grace. And that not in the common way — for he is distinguished from other teachers with a similar office. On the other hand, we must note this: he received anointing, not only for himself that he might carry out the office of teaching, but for his whole body that the power of the Spirit might be present in the continuing preaching of the gospel.³⁷

5. Moses was a saviour. Seccombe states that Moses, being under the anointing of God, “single-handed, rescued his people from the slavery of Egypt” as described in Exodus 3, 4; Acts 7: 20 -39. But Christ, the redeemer par excellence, saves the world from the bondage and slavery of sin and the Devil (Ephesians 2: 1 - 8; Romans 3: 28 to 4: 6).³⁸

6. Moses was conscious of his leadership mandate. This is seen in his complaint to God as he says, ““You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me”” (Exodus 33: 12). Stephen, in his apologetic speech to the Sanhedrin, proclaimed concerning Moses that:

This is the same Moses, whom they had rejected with the words, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. He led them out of Egypt and did wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert’ (Acts 7: 35 - 36).

The prophet Isaiah prophesied: “See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader

³⁶ Blenkinsopp 1995:118

³⁷ Calvin II: XV, 2

³⁸ Seccombe 2002:102

and commander of the peoples” (Isaiah 55:4). Jesus Christ is the leader and the shepherd of God’s peoples (John 10: 11, 14; Hebrews 13: 20; Isaiah 40: 11). David Seccombe comments that “Perhaps it was John the Baptist who originated the idea that Jesus’ mission was to lead the new exodus.”³⁹

7. Moses in his prophetic ministry was also a judge, as it is written in Exodus 18: 13: “The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood round him from morning till evening.” Just as Moses judged Israel, so Christ fulfils the same function in his prophetic role. “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son” (John 5: 22). While Christ is currently judge and arbitrator of everything in the body of Christ, yet one day He will assume this task when He comes again and sits on the judgment seat to judge everything and everyone (Daniel 12; Matt. 25; 2 Corinthians 5: 10; Rev 22: 12).

8. Moses was a great miracles performer as seen in the plagues on Egypt, and the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 7 to 14; Deuteronomy 34: 10 - 12). But Jesus did much greater miracles than Moses. In Acts 2: 22 Peter preached that: “... Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him as, as you yourselves know.” In the house of Cornelius, Peter repeated almost the same statement: “You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached — how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him” (Acts 10: 37, 38). What is noteworthy in this account is that although Jesus was God and man in His mediatorial work of salvation, His miracles performance was by the means of the power of God the Father through the anointing of Holy Spirit. Therefore, in His prophetic office, He was the miracles worker, as Moses was, under God’s empowerment.⁴⁰

3.3 CHRIST THE MESSIANIC PROPHET

In response to the question “how doth Christ execute the office of a prophet?” the

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Allison 1993:207-208

Westminster Shorter Catechism answers by saying that: “Christ executeth the office of a Prophet, in revealing to us by his Word and his Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.”⁴¹ We have already seen that the prophet is anointed by the Holy Spirit and is authorized to speak forth to people on the behalf of God.

Christ’s prophetic office means, in fact, that Christ presents God to humans. Jesus is the light of the world (John 1: 4 - 5), who comes to show God the Father to mankind (John 14: 9). This is one of the reasons why Christ came into the world. Thus what He says and does reveals God, e.g. John 8: 26 - 28; 3: 2. But it goes further than this – He reveals God by what He is ⁴², so that to see Him is to see the Father (John 14: 9; 2 Corinthians 4: 6; 5: 19). The revelation which He brings, though in continuity with that of the prophets, is nevertheless unique (Hebrews 1:1ff). To so reveal the Father, He must himself be one with the Father; that is, He must be God. This is clear from John 1: 18. Therefore, His work in revealing the Father requires His deity. But Christ does not only reveal God. His life is also a revelation of human. As the true and sinless Human He shows what human should be, and He therefore reveals the sinfulness of fallen human. If His humanity were at any point unreal, we could not say that this is a revelation of what human should be. Therefore, to truly reveal human, He himself had to be human.

Thus, for the work of revelation, both the deity and the humanity of Christ are needed. Under the Old Testament Christ taught us by means of types and shadows the history of redemption and by His providential care over the people of Israel. Since the Old Testament prophet is “one who sees things ... who receives revelations, who is in the service of God, particularly as a messenger who speaks in his name,”⁴³ Jesus Christ assumes these functions both before and after His incarnation (1Peter 1: 11). Concerning Christ’s prophetic office before incarnation, Koehler, in his book, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, explains how Christ assumed His prophetic function in the Old Testament by stating that “Hence, even before his incarnation it was Christ, the Son of God, who made known to Moses and the prophets the word and the will of God by sending His Spirit into their hearts.”⁴⁴ Though it was the Spirit of Christ that was at work

⁴¹ Wainwright, 1997: 100

⁴² Bruce Milne 152 (‘Know the Truth’): “He both proclaims and incarnates God’s demands on us.”

⁴³ Berkhof 1986:358

⁴⁴ Koehler 1952:108

in the Old Testament's prophets, when we speak of Christ's prophetic office we speak in the perspective of His state of humiliation and glorification.⁴⁵

It was Moses who foretold of a great prophet to come who will be like him, and that he will have to be listened to by the people (Deuteronomy 18: 15). Peter, who was the leading apostle to whom Christ had entrusted the responsibility to shepherd His people (John 21: 15 - 17), was the first to articulate the true identity of Jesus under divine inspiration by saying that "You are the Christ, the son of the living God" (Matthew 16: 16). Peter, once more under divine inspiration, went on to apply Moses' prediction of the prophet to come to Jesus Christ (Acts 3: 22 - 23). It is clear that Peter understood what it meant for Jesus to be the Messiah more than any scholar or theologian after the early Church. Stephen the Martyr, in his apologetic before the Sanhedrin, declared that Jesus was the promised Messiah: "This is that Moses who told the Israelites, 'God will send you a prophet like me from your own people'" (Acts 7: 37). The apostle John testifies about Jesus in His prophetic role of enlightenment, saying that "the true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world" (John 1:9). As the light, whoever follows Him is set free from the darkness that clouds our minds (John 8: 12). He is the revealer of the God the Father (John 1: 18).

Thompson comments that there are some traits of Jesus which seem to confirm Jesus' prophetic view of His ministry. He quotes Schillebeeckx, who says that "Jesus admittedly never identifies himself with the eschatological prophet; but he does nevertheless interpret his mission and course of action in terms of latter day prophecy."⁴⁶ Speaking of Jesus' prophetic traits, Thompson goes on to point to Reginald Fuller who finds prophetic traits in Jesus ministry: "He uses the prophetic 'I came' and 'I was sent' (Luke 12: 49; Mark 2: 17); his sense of authority; his critiques as recorded in Matthew 23, whose finality indicates that Jesus thought of his mission not only as belonging to the same class as that of the Old Testament prophets, but as representing the final prophetic mission to Israel, and of his own rejection (and possible martyrdom) as the culmination of Israel's rejection of the word of Yahweh."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Thompson 1985:213,214

⁴⁷ Ibid.

In spite of the uncertainty of Christ's consciousness of His prophetic office among some scholars, it is biblically convincing that Jesus speaks of Himself as a prophet (Luke 13: 33), and he expressly claims to speak only what His father has commanded Him to say (John 12:49-50; 14:10, 24; 15:15; 17:8, 20). In His prayer for His disciples, this aspect of His prophetic ministry is strongly explicit, as Jesus says: "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world ... everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you and they believed that you sent me ... I have given them your word ... I have made you known to them and will continue to make you known" (John 17: 6, 7, 8, 14, 26). Jesus speaks of the future (Matthew 24:3 - 35), and speaks with an amazing authority unlike all others (Matthew 7: 29). Indeed, Jesus' words are accompanied with the demonstration of power of God (Acts 10: 38), as His miraculous performances vindicate the veracity of His message (Matthew 21: 11, 46; Luke 7: 16, 24: 19; John 3: 2, 4: 19, 7: 40, 9: 17). Above all, Jesus declared Himself to be a prophet at the beginning of His ministry in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4: 16 - 21). Jesus quotes from Isaiah 61, where the servant of the Lord declares the gospel of salvation. Isaiah has uttered these words first, but Jesus appropriates that prophecy to Himself in declaring: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus simply means that 'I am the one of whom that prophecy spoke about, and here I come to proclaim the good news of deliverance and restoration.' Jesus is the prophet who reveals the will of God for the salvation of humankind.

In John 14: 6 - 7, Jesus makes what seems to be for many people a shocking statement as he says: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." This statement gives much light to Bernard's comment on Jesus' words: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me ..." (Luke 4: 18). Bernard challenges modern criticism that reduced the role of Christ to a mere herald. He poses the question whether the one proclaiming is evidence of the proclamation. He says that the Lucan narrative establishes an intimate and indissoluble connection between the activity of Jesus Himself and the coming of the kingdom. Stonehouse says that: "Jesus' quotation from Isaiah and his declaration concerning its fulfilment thrust his own person

forward as an integral part of the message.”⁴⁸

Thus, when Jesus says, “I AM the way,” we see an exclusivity which cannot be denied, or overlooked. Since Jesus refers to going to His father’s house (v.2), and that “No-one comes to the Father except through me (v.6), we can see that He is not speaking of the moral way (although that is included in his teaching), but here He is talking of the way of salvation leading to the Father. He is confidently stating that He is not one of many ways to God, but ‘the way’. This astounding claim hits at the heart of our pluralistic society and the syncretistic philosophy to which it dearly subscribes and holds on. In one fell swoop, He disintegrates human beings’ false notions of approaching God, and asserts His uniqueness. And when Jesus claims to be ‘the truth’, He speaks of His utter veracity and reliability. All that He has said, claimed and done can be both believed and trusted in, not simply because He tells the truth, but because He is the truth. He is the word of God that has become flesh (John 1: 14). As Carson in his book *The Gospel According to John* insightfully points out, “Jesus is the truth, because he embodies the supreme revelation of God - he himself narrates God (John 1: 18), he says and does exclusively what the Father gives him to say and do (John 5: 19ff, 8: 29), indeed he is properly called God (John 1:1, 18; 20: 28). He is God’s gracious self-disclosure, his ‘Word’, made flesh (John 1: 14).”⁴⁹

Hence, Jesus’ prophetic office linked with Him being ‘the way and the truth’. It is through His nature and His revelations of God’s will that humans can know the way to the Father, know the truth and have life in Christ.

In fact, Christ’s prophetic work does not cease with the end of His earthly ministry at His ascension. As Louis Berkhof notes, Christ “continues His prophetic activity through the operation of the Holy Spirit. His teachings are both verbal and factual, that is, He teaches not only by verbal communications, but also by the facts of revelation, such as the incarnation, His atoning death, the resurrection and ascension.”⁵⁰ Christ is the one who sends the Holy Spirit, and as the Spirit of Christ, He is the one who “will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment” (John 16: 8). As Christ is the Word incarnate, and the central figure in biblical revelation, so, too, we cannot

⁴⁸ Bernard, S, 1951. *The Witness of Luke to Christ* (Tyndale Press)

⁴⁹ Carson 1991:491

⁵⁰ Berkhof 1986: 359

divorce the work of His Spirit from the written word since Christ continues to fulfil the office of prophet, continuing to speak to His people through the word and the Holy Spirit.⁵¹

a. Christ's prophetic role

In this section, the role of Christ in His prophetic office will be discussed in the context of Luke 4: 18 - 21, as the passage quoted from Isaiah 61: 1, 2 has been considered as the key passage for the understanding of Christ's prophetic function. Pannenberg comments that "Isaiah 61: 1 played a significant role in the primitive Christian history of the traditions: A logion from Q picks up Isaiah 61: 1 (Matt.11: 2-6; Luke 7: 18 - 23), as does the Lucan special tradition in Luke 4: 16 - 30 in which the old Christology about Jesus as a prophet like Moses (following Deut. 18: 15) can be recognized."⁵²

We have already seen that John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (II: XV, 2) interprets Christ's prophetic office from Isaiah 61: 1, 2; cf. Luke 4: 18; Matthew 17: 5; 1 Corinthians 1: 30, and Colossians 2: 3 as a teaching office. Though there is much truth in Calvin's interpretation, Calvin falls short in considering all the aspects that constitute the fullness of Christ's prophetic ministry, as pointed out by Stroup:

When John Calvin discusses Jesus' function as prophet, he interprets it primarily as a teaching office. In this context, Calvin quotes Col. 2: 3 ("in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge", and describes Jesus as teaching perfect doctrine which has brought an end to all prophecies. That interpretation of the prophetic office, however, emphasizes Jesus' teaching and fails to recognize the importance of the rest of Jesus' ministry.⁵³

For Schleiermacher, as pointed out by Rieger, Christ's work is defined by teaching, prophesying and doing miracles. These three expressions of Christ's prophetic role cannot be separated.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Pannenberg 1968:214

⁵³ Stroup 1982:91

⁵⁴ Rieger 2007:209

In the book *Transforming Mission* Bosch does not relate Luke 4:16-21 to a particular office of Christ, but rather sees it in the perspective of both Christ as well as of the Church' mission as he states:

Luke 4:16-21 has, for all practical purposes, replaced Matthew's 'Great Commission' as the key text not only for understanding Christ's own mission but also that of the churchThe entire ministry of Jesus and his relationships with the poor, with women and with other marginalized people witness, in Luke's writings, to Jesus' practice of boundary-breaking compassion, which the church is called to emulate.⁵⁵

Hays goes on to explain, if Christ is identifying Himself in these passages, it is done in order to identify His *ongoing* mission as well, the mission *dei*. "By evoking these texts at the beginning of His ministry, Luke's Jesus declares Himself as the Messiah who by the power of the Spirit will create a restored Israel in which justice and compassion for the poor prevails"⁵⁶

The announcement in the synagogue at Nazareth is a declaration that Jesus has been empowered by the Holy Spirit to inaugurate the liberation of God's chosen people, and to continue this liberation through the lifeblood of the Church. In these passages, we see Christ both gathering and sending God's people. He gathers them from their roots as the people of God and sends them out into the world to continue His ongoing mission in the world. This programmatic declaration of his mission is a proclamation that the jubilee year of Leviticus 25 is at hand, a time when all slaves are freed, all debts cancelled, and all property redistributed. When Jesus makes the declaration that this Scripture is now fulfilled within the hearing of His listeners at Nazareth, "He is pointing not just to some spiritual reality but to 'a social event',it is a visible socio-political, economic restructuring of relations among the people of God, achieved by His intervention in the person of Jesus as the one Anointed and endued with the Spirit."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Bosch 1991:84-86

⁵⁶ Hays 1996:116

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1996:241

The content of the story of Luke 4:16-21 is exceptionally significant. The account is a 'preface to Jesus' entire public ministry'⁵⁸, 'a condensed version of the gospel story as a whole'⁵⁹, a 'programmatic discourse'⁶⁰, 'a sort of manifesto'⁶¹, and 'the basis of Luke's entire gospel and a prelude to Acts.'⁶²

Bosch notes three fundamental concerns of Luke's gospel as a whole that are revealed in Jesus' inaugural sermon: the Gentile mission, the centrality of the poor in Jesus' mission, and the setting aside of the vengeance.

- **Background and the meaning of Luke 4: 18 - 21**

The meaning of Luke 4: 18 - 21, in which Jesus describes the purpose of His mission under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, is worthy of consideration. The background of Isaianic quotation is crucial to the understanding of this particular passage. What Jesus reads is curious, consisting not of a single passage, but of Isaiah 61:1 - 2a with one line missing, and one supplied from 58: 6. Isaiah 58 contains a prophetic rebuke of the nation for not exhibiting justice towards those in disadvantaged conditions in their midst. Yahweh declares to the nation that the fast He desires is one that treats one's neighbour properly. Isaiah 61: 1 - 11 is part of the hymn which explains the prophet's mission in the consolation of Zion. 'In the original the prophet puts into the mouth of Yahweh's ideal servant a gracious message to those in captivity, promising release and a return to the restored Jerusalem, the joy of which is compared to the joy of the year of Jubilee. It is obvious that the return from exile and the release at the Jubilee admirably express Christ's work of redemption'.⁶³

Young asserts that the introductory words suggest that the speaker is the one called and endowed for the prophetic office. The endowment of the Spirit implies not merely an anointing, but also that in the anointing rich gifts were bestowed. The passage may refer to the prophets, in that through their faithful proclamation Christ accomplishes the

⁵⁸ Anderson 1964:260

⁵⁹ Dillon 1979:249

⁶⁰ Dupont 1979:20-21

⁶¹ Bosch 1991:100

⁶² Ibid., 89,112

⁶³ Plummer, 1905:121

purpose set forth in this passage. It seems that the choice of this word ‘anoint’ (‘He has anointed me’) may suggest that the speaker and the Messiah are the same individual. Ancient kings and prophets and high-priests were set apart for their work by anointing with oil (1 Kings 19: 15, 16; Exodus 29: 7; 1Samuel 9: 16). Hence those who were set apart for the work of God as king, prophet, or priest, were called the Messiah, a Hebrew word signifying the ‘Anointed’, or the ‘Christ’, a Greek word signifying the same thing. And being anointed is not meant that he was literally anointed, for he was never set apart in that manner, but that God had set him apart for this work; that he had constituted or appointed him to be the prophet, priest, and king of his people.⁶⁴

Luke uses five infinitival phrases to indicate the nature of the task the anointed one is designated to perform:

1. ‘To preach good news to the poor’ (Luke 4:18).

The verb ‘to preach’ is thematic in Luke-Acts for the messianic message, in that Jesus is imaged as representative of God to His people. There has been a lot of discussion about what Luke means by ‘the poor’ in this particular context. But the word poor (*ptochos*) normally means ‘destitute’, those who are unable to subsist without charitable assistance. ‘The poor’ is the key to understanding Luke’s message in that this is the major theme in the first half of Luke (see 6: 20, 7: 22, 14: 13, 21, 16: 20, 22). According to Seccombe, the poor are the sons of Israel understood in terms of their great need of healing, understanding, forgiveness, freedom and peace; in short, their need for salvation.⁶⁵ In Bosch’s view, poor is primarily a social category, a ‘collective term for all the disadvantaged’ or ‘all who experience misery’⁶⁶ like the captives, the maimed, the blind, and the lepers. This is seen in the fact that ‘poor’ either heads or concludes lists of the disadvantaged. It describes those who have been deprived of dignity and selfhood, of sight, of voice, of health, and of bread. It may also have a spiritual nuance, of those who are devout and humble, and live in utter dependence on God but this is secondary. The term points to those on the margins, those who have been excluded for various reasons.

⁶⁴ Young 1972:458

⁶⁵ Seccombe 1982:66

⁶⁶ Bosch 1991:99, Bosch’s view of poor reflects the image of the majority of black Africans.

2. 'To proclaim release to the captives' (Luke 4:18).

In the Old Testament (cf. Is. 40 - 55) reference to captives meant the exiled, but it also had a spiritual connotation. Mostly it is used for Israel as a whole, captive daughter of Zion. Based on the Isaiah quotation, it may in actual sense refer to Jerusalem or her characterization, inhabited but still captive to alien powers and to a host of evils. Looking at it from the New Testament perspective, captives are more likely to be seen in terms of the overall spiritual-cum-political oppression of Israel, rather than literal prisoners or exiles. Thus 'to release the oppressed' is open to the same breadth of interpretation as 'to proclaim release to captives'.⁶⁷ Jesus' declaration is in relation to the long awaited restoration of Israel: The end of Gentile (Babylon, Assyrian, Persian, Greek and Roman) domination, satanic domination, the gathering of the dispersed exiles, and the destruction of all oppressive structures - political, social, economic and spiritual – in an ultimate jubilee of divine forgiveness and reconciliation.⁶⁸

3. 'To recover sight for the blind' (Luke 4:18).

Israel as the chosen people going to exile was a disastrous experience. It was characterized as darkness which was considered as being in a dungeon. Returning home from exile is symbolized as return of sight. In this connection darkness and light were also images for the absence or presence of God. It is very explicit in what Isaiah speaks in Chapters 59: 9ff and in 63: 19. This is in reference to the situation Israelites found themselves in and therefore Zion's salvation means the coming of Yahweh to rule in their midst, that is, the dawning of light. Therefore, recovery of sight indicates spiritual enlightenment, or deliverance from anguish.⁶⁹

4. 'To let the oppressed go free' (Luke 4:18).

Prophet Isaiah describes an underclass comprised of the faithful within Israel who are oppressed, economically impoverished and victimized by social injustice. These faithful Israelites endure all kinds of ill-treatment and the only way out is to entrust themselves to Yahweh and await eschatological salvation. The message of the prophet in Isaiah 61: 1 is

⁶⁷ Seccombe 1982:56

⁶⁸ Ibid., 1982:163

⁶⁹ Ibid., 59-60

that the awaited Messianic kingdom characterized by social justice is very near indeed. However, in the Lukan context, this Messianic kingdom has dawned with the coming of Christ.

5. 'To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord' (Luke 4:19).

This means the year which God has graciously appointed in order to manifest his salvation; it is an allusion to the 'year of Jubilee'. The Jubilee took its name from the great ram's horn (jobel) which was blown on the Day of Atonement at the end of forty nine years to announce the beginning of the Jubilee. It was to be the year of freedom instituted by Moses and it was held every fifty years but now is symbolic of God's saving acts. The four main provisions in this Jubilee legislation of Leviticus 25 include (i) the return of the property, (ii) the release of all Israelite slaves, (iii) the cancellation of all debts, (iv) the land to lie fallow.⁷⁰ Jesus citation of this passage takes the picture of freedom to show what God is doing spiritually and physically through his anointed Messiah. Jubilee by analogy becomes a picture of total forgiveness and salvation, just as it was in its prophetic usage in Isaiah 61.⁷¹

Hence, 'acceptable' time in this context probably has to do with the divine will and purpose, and in particular divine will for salvation of God's faithful people.

'Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down', clearly signifies the synagogue procedure. The reading was done standing while the exposition was done sitting; this gives a picture of Jesus assuming the responsibility of a teacher, Jesus' previous reputation in vv.14 - 15, 23, and the chosen text justified the riveted attention.

Jesus concludes the reading in declaring that the time of fulfilment of Isaiah 61: 1 is now. The 'today' of salvation is inaugurated in the ministry of Jesus but not terminated by its close. The fulfilment is literally 'in your ears' because it consists of the words from Isaiah being spoken by the one for whom they were prophetically destined.⁷² This was a sudden transformation of a prophecy about the messenger who would one day come to announce the jubilee of Israel's salvation, to an announcement made by the anointed

⁷⁰ Seccombe, 2002:158-160 and Rodgers, 1981:72-82

⁷¹ Block, 1994:410

⁷² Nolland, 1989:198

messenger Himself. This was in actual sense the announcement for total restoration of Israel's spiritual, social, political and economical life by a decisive act of God - beginning at the moment of this declaration.

Luke 4: 23-27 portrays strongly the prophetic aspect of the ministry of Christ which Pannenberg believes and emphasizes to be the only earthly office of Christ justified from the anointing of Jesus, but this view is inconsistent in light of the fulfilment of Isaiah 61:1 in the earthly ministry of Christ. In analyzing the Scriptures relating the Holy Spirit to Christ, or the Scriptures implying Jesus' anointment, it is biblically convincing that Christ did exercise the three functions of Prophet, Priest, and King in many different titles. If Isaiah 61: 1 was a prophetic announcement pointing to the Messiah, Jesus is the Messiah through whom the contents of that prophetic announcement were fulfilled in His threefold office.

Having said this, it is perhaps suitable to admit that even though the triplex priest, king prophet formula is the more wholesome form of Christ's work and person, it still does not fully describe the complete person of Christ. The contribution it has made in theological schools, churches and other institutions and for persons of religious faith is that it has laid a foundation for the various titles which spring forth as the attributes of Christ's person and work. This does not mean that there were no other titles of the work of Christ that were being propagated at the time, but a better understanding of the nature and the work of Christ was achieved though the threefold office formula.

Examples of such were that man was created in three spheres — a heart that loves God, a hand that rules in His stead, and a mind that knows Him. When man sinned, he lost his triune dignity. Hence the Messiah condescended and became the second Adam, who ensured our salvation. It is through His unfaltering obedience as priest-king and prophet that man's loss of Edenic status was procured and restored. Not only did this triple doctrine seek to permeate the study of human salvation, but it sought to explore the avenues of the Triune God for it stated that Christ obtained the kingdom from His Father through the Holy Ghost. He functioned as an eschatological prophet.⁷³

⁷³ Jansen, 1956:17

The aspect of the deliverance features prominently in the mission of Jesus Christ as the Saviour, as pointed out in Luke 4: 18, 19. Although this passage has received varied interpretations, especially in modern Christological discourses, a large number of scholars are of the opinion that Christ's mission to the world chiefly encompassed the liberation and the deliverance of the oppressed in one form or another. Morris rightly says, "Jesus saw himself as coming with good news for the world's troubled people." God's people are held in captivity by an evil regime and there is urgent need to wage a war to deliver and liberate them from the clutches of this evil master. In this Lukan passage, the evil oppressive regime has manifested itself in poverty, captivity, and blindness and downtrodden-ness. Indeed, that the world is held in imprisonment by an evil oppressor resonates through the entire Bible.⁷⁴ In the Gospels this is elaborated upon in demonic possession resulting in such physical disabilities such as blindness, lameness and also mental disorders, and a variety of other miseries. And Jesus forthrightly identifies the chief author of this oppressive regime over God's people as Satan. He describes the woman he heals as "a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years" (Luke 13:16). A consonant statement is found in Acts 10:38 where Peter says Christ "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil." The phrase "all who were oppressed by the devil", says MacAthur, "encompasses the whole gamut of human ailments from direct demon possession to disease to spiritual darkness."⁷⁵ The power is also expressed through sin: "everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin" (John 8: 34). This power is further depicted as the darkness that hinders God's people from comprehending Christ (John 1: 4, 5) and is also in the form of a kingdom (Col.1: 13). In other words, the unsaved person is enslaved "under a tyranny where the power of the darkness reigns".⁷⁶ The Hebrew writer identifies the oppressor in the form of the death (Heb. 2: 14). All these are depictions of Satan whose chief evidences of control over human life "are bodily and mental illness, moral obliquity and institutional corruption"⁷⁷

Christ has come to set free God's people. He has come to deliver the people of God out of the domain of Satan, to break the yoke of slavery on them and grant them liberty. As

⁷⁴ Morris 1988:117

⁷⁵ MacAthur 1994:302

⁷⁶ Lukas 1980:42

⁷⁷ Caird 1994:109

we read of His exorcising of the demonic spirits, the healings, the conversion and the open outright rebukes of Satan, we witness the progressive deliverance of the world out of the chains of Satan's reign. It is a war of deliverance. Jeremias reckons that "Jesus enters this world enslaved by the Satan with the authority of God, not only to exercise mercy, but above all to join battle with the evil." The victories over the satanic forces are signs of the work of his deliverance and liberation of God's people. They are achievements of his mission to "seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19: 10).⁷⁸ In the words of Kistemaker, "Where Jesus went; he was a benefactor to the people. He reclaimed territory from Satan, so that the devil had to yield his power to Jesus."⁷⁹ In essence "He liberated all those who were in Satan's power".⁸⁰ Confident of achieving his deliverance mission, Christ affirms: "So if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed" (John 8: 36). It is certain that the world is in bondage. And it is certain that Jesus will set it loose from the satanic clutches. Thus, Jesus Christ's complete overpowering of Satan and his demons is the act of deliverance of God's people. "Without a divine deliverance", reckons Lucas as he reflects on Colossians 1:13, "there was no escape. But, through Christ these powers have been forced to yield their prey, and see their erstwhile captives released to belong to the realm of a great king."⁸¹

Thus, Jesus was not identified only as one of the prophets but as an eschatological prophet, one who proclaims God's ultimate purpose and ultimate end and who brings to bear the definitive salvific activity of God for people. Jesus did not simply proclaim the Kingdom of God and call people for a response of faith, but he laid His own life on the line for the truth of His message that gives prophetic utterance its true authority. It is on this level that we can profitably speak in historical terms of Jesus' own awareness of His mission. Christ's prophetic office was also characterized by two other factors. First, for Jesus and his followers, "prophet" is evidently synonymous with "miracle-worker". In this, therefore, Jesus performs many healings of various illnesses, especially demon possession. Second, with other prophets, Jesus manifests special concerns for the outcast, the suffering, and the lowly. Nolan, writing from a South African perspective, points out that: "The people to whom Jesus turned his attention are referred to in the Gospels by a

⁷⁸ Jeremias 1971:94

⁷⁹ Kistemaker 1990:394

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Lucas 1980:42

variety of terms: the poor, the blind, the lame, the cripple, the lepers, the hungry, the miserable (those who weep), sinners, prostitutes, tax collectors, demoniacs (those oppressed by unclean spirits), the persecuted, the downtrodden, the captives, all who labour and are overburdened, the rabble who know nothing of the law, the crowds, the little ones, the least, the last and the babes or the lost sheep of the house of Israel."⁸² These are the people to whom the good news of the Kingdom of God was preached. There is no doubt that the description of these people is a reflection of many black African people, too.

• Jesus the Teacher

As a prophet, Jesus holds a teaching office. Throughout the gospels, Jesus is called teacher and rabbi. His followers are His disciples, His students. Furthermore, what He actually says is the proclamation about the arrival of the Kingdom of God, His calls to repentance, His summons to true faithfulness, and judgment to come.

The prophetic office of Christ in His teaching role was mostly characterized by the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God for which He was calling people to restore their hearts to allow the reign of God in their lives. In the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Jesus Christ primarily focuses in preaching and teaching God's way of salvation, calling people to reform their ways of life. Some passages clearly indicate this point:

"From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is near'" (Matthew 4: 17, 23). "... Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said, 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'" (Mark 1:14, 15). Seccombe points out that:

The message the herald brought was called a gospel, in Jesus' case 'the gospel of God', for the new order which he proclaimed was the kingdom of God. For the people who heard such announcement there were two options: believe or disbelieve. If you believe, it was time to forsake old loyalties and declare allegiance to the new power.⁸³

⁸² Nolan, 1976:3

⁸³ Seccombe 2002:194

Thompson shows that according to the Synoptic Gospels “Jesus centred his work on the eager expectation of the Kingdom of God.”⁸⁴

Jesus teaches that the key priority in life is to seek God’s ‘kingdom and his righteousness’ (Matthew 6: 33). White says that “The kingdom means the reign of God within each soul living under the divine sovereignty; wherever a life surrenders to the Father, there the kingdom has come; it is ‘with you’ or ‘among you’ just in the measure in which the will of God expressed in Christ is accepted and trusted.”⁸⁵ He goes on to say: “... as the inward ruling principle of the ideal life, and as the goal of all moral endeavour and hope - the kingdom is for Jesus an essential ethical conception, though wholly inseparable from His religious vision and faith.”⁸⁶ Jesus’ message was for people to realize and acknowledge their state of misery due to their sins, and to believe the good news which is centred in the promised Saviour of the world.⁸⁷ As stated by Harold “The way to the king, as Christ points out, is to repent and believe the good news concerning the one in whom they would find forgiveness of sins. Jesus called on his hearers to turn away from the service of sin, to be sorry they had fallen away from God and by faith to trust in him who alone offers forgiveness.”⁸⁸

The most important point while approaching the prophetic office of Christ as a teacher is to see how it was dominated by a goal more definite and more practical. Jesus’ appeal was directed in the first instance to the men and women whom He met day by day. And it was not sufficient for Him that He should instruct them as a teacher instructs His students. Rather, His aim was to break down the barriers which were effectively separating them from the living God, and to establish between them and God such intimate and personal relationship that they would come to know God as their Father and themselves as his children, that they would order their lives in complete accordance with God’s rule, and that, by acknowledging God’s rule in their own lives, they would serve to advance its establishment in the lives of others and throughout God’s creation.

⁸⁴ Thompson 1985:183

⁸⁵ White 1979:78-79

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Harold 1988:22

Thompson explains that Jesus' expectation of the Kingdom was not just for the sake of individual relation with God, but it is the inclusion of 'individuals who are related in a new network of social relationship.' 'This is not any kind of community, but the community of the divine rooted in Jesus' trust in a particular view of the Divine which He expects.' For this community to be a 'saving and liberating reality' it must be 'rooted in divine intimacy and love as the foundation of his hope and trust.' It is only when love rules in this community that it 'can promise salvation from those communities where lovelessness rules.' This is how this new community can 'be an effective response to the crises of the times.'⁸⁹ Thus the love of God and of neighbour stand at the centre of Christ's prophetic teaching; in this regard, it is noteworthy to welcome Gutierrez's definition of sin as explained by Erickson in saying that "to sin is to refuse to love one's neighbours and therefore the Lord himself. This refusal, whether personal or collective, is the ultimate cause of poverty, injustice, and oppression."⁹⁰

Sobrino comments that Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom as good news for the poor, but more specifically drew to Himself, ministered to and healed those who suffered material or social oppression, who were outcast, or who were deemed unclean or immoral by the pious religious hierarchy. In short, Jesus' ministry was a continuation of the theme of the biblical prophets who preached hope for those who needed liberation.⁹¹ Sobrino goes on to state that the deeds of Jesus were signs of the coming Kingdom in a world in need of change. The negative situations that demanded this change, the conditions of those that are described as "the poor", a collective grouping of those who are oppressed, afflicted and despised, are described in the gospels as needing to be overcome. "To these people - the helpless sick, the segregated lepers, the schismatic Samaritans, the marginalized women, the foreign centurion, the despised sinners, and the like - Jesus gave the message that the Kingdom was theirs. To the righteous religious elite and scribes, and the wealthy merchants or land barons, Jesus many times gave the admonishment that they were, in fact, the sinners and the oppressors in this world which was so in need of the coming Kingdom."⁹²

⁸⁹ Thompson 1985: 185-194

⁹⁰ Erickson 1983:591

⁹¹ Sobrino 1987:142-143

⁹² Ibid., 142-145

Jesus went beyond proclamation, denunciation and acts of love to “the poor”, however, by following a “historical course of voluntary impoverishment.”⁹³ This impoverishment was not just in the sense of material goods, but in the willingness to be stripped of all human dignity. Sobrino sees this step of total solidarity with the poor as essential in the mission of Jesus. His Christology and theology of the Kingdom come together with the crucifixion - God’s willingness to be deprived of human life, rights, and justice, as well as to suffer the ultimate oppression of murder - as being a prerequisite for the coming of the Kingdom of God that will ameliorate the conditions of the majority of humans who suffer the same ignominious treatment.

Kaylor, writing of the social conflict and crisis of Roman Palestine at the time of Jesus, states that:

Jesus’ ministry took place within that revolutionary milieu. He can hardly have remained unaffected by it. Announcing the Kingdom of God in that situation would tell the people of God’s concern to change their present that deprived them of happiness and well-being. The issues of poverty, justice, and peace occupy central places in his teachings and ministry. Jesus’ response to the plight of the poor and to the failure of covenant community to deal with the social situation caused profound disturbances among those who controlled society. They perceived Jesus as dangerous to the system they maintained, and thus they defended it against the threat he posed.⁹⁴

The cultural mindset of humankind throughout history has constituted the barrier for a proper relationship with God, as human beings, due to the consequence of original sin, have been rebellious against God in refusing to acknowledge their sinful state and come to repentance. It is not surprising to see people today refuting blindly the truth about sin and guilt. The evil that people do has been dissociated from God who calls them to righteousness and holds them responsible for what they do. The wrong-doer is now regarded as sick, in need of a doctor, as pointed out by Braaten and Jenson.⁹⁵

The distortion of the truth about God or the lack of knowledge of God and His will for

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Kaylor 1994:44

⁹⁵ Braaten and Jenson 200:7-8

His creation has been a big concern of God since the fall of mankind. God, in creating man, was the only one to guide and to instruct man but when man fell, his mind was taken captive and God was no longer the source of human knowledge. Human beings started to create their own philosophy of life with the inspiration of the devil (Ephesians 2: 1 - 3). In the account of the fall, the issue of knowledge seems to be at the centre of temptation as the serpent told Eve that there was some truth that God was hiding from them. So the serpent presents himself as having the revelation of the knowledge of that truth. Shockingly, the forbidden fruit to Eve's eyes was 'desirable for gaining wisdom' (Genesis 3: 5 - 7).

In the drama of the fall, we see God Himself to be the first to question the source of man's knowledge of his own nakedness, which Adam claimed was the reason for his hiding: "Who told you that you were naked?" (Genesis 3:11).

God's concern for mankind's source of knowledge is strongly emphasized in the Bible, as we see over and over again, through different agents, God calling mankind back to knowledge of His will. Often, we have the tendency to think that only the people outside God's covenant are ignorant of God, but it has been biblically proven that there are many within God's people who remain ignorant of God and His will.

The Old Covenant's people are the clear example for this sad reality, as we see a number of prophets sent by God to address this problem of rebelliousness based on ignorance of who God really is. The prophet Isaiah (1:2-4) states: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." In the same line of thought the prophet Hosea (4:6) made it very clear in saying: "my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests ..." Immediately before the Jews went into exile in Babylon, the prophet Jeremiah (9:6) said, concerning the Jews: "You live in the midst of deception; in their deceit they refuse to acknowledge me."

In the New Testament, the problem of ignorance or lack of Knowledge of God continues to be prominent as the gospel and the first epistle of John emphasize the necessity of

knowing the truth of God. In 1John 5: 19 - 20, John, in addressing the issue of sin, tells us how the “whole world is under the control of the devil ... that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true ...” And John 8: 32 states: “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Thus, Thompson points out the fact when Jesus came proclaiming the Kingdom of God, he was looking for our response in repentance and faith.⁹⁶ We have already seen how listening and obeying the prophet’s message was the key in benefiting or enjoying God’s blessings.

We need to realize that the teaching of Jesus was not only the impartation of knowledge; it was always directed towards practical ends affecting the relation between God and humans. Seccombe writes that in proclaiming the kingdom of God “Jesus’ intention was thus to found a new society of transformed individuals based on the timeless ethical and religious principles of the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of humanity.”⁹⁷

Thus Turretin clearly explains that it is only through the prophetic office of Christ that our ignorance is healed and only through Christ’s prophetic light that the darkness of error is scattered. In fact, God had to send His only Son as our prophet to reveal to us, by teaching us, the way of salvation for our reconciliation with God.⁹⁸

- **Jesus the miracle worker and the exorcist**

Stroup indicates that “An important aspect of Jesus’ prophetic office is that his words are inseparable from his actions. In the Gospel narratives the two are interrelated and the one cannot be isolated from the other.” His teaching, in other words, was always a prelude to action; and it is in the results which Jesus accomplished, rather than simply in the truths which He taught, that we ought to see His unique greatness and unique authority. In John 17: 3, Jesus declares: “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Thompson 1985:191

⁹⁷ Seccombe 2002: 168

⁹⁸ Turretin 1994:393

⁹⁹ Stroup 1982:92

According to Berkouwer:

His (Christ) preaching is a calling of sinners to conversion, a preaching by which a people in darkness see great light (Matt. 4:16). But his preaching of the kingdom of heaven, his doctrine and proclamation are surrounded by the signs of his kingship in the healing of the sick (Matt. 4:23, 24), the casting out of demons (Matt. 8:16), and the raising of the dead (John 11). Of this Prophet it is written that the Scripture was fulfilled in him: "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (cf. Matt. 8:17; 10:7).¹⁰⁰

For many blacks in Africa sickness can be caused by sin, immorality, demonic power mediated by witches, witchcraft, or an upset ancestor.¹⁰¹ These alien spirits invade the victim, causing them to suffer illness and terrible misfortune, to have nightmares and to behave unnaturally.¹⁰² What is interesting is that black Africans' perception of sickness is almost the same as that of the Jews of the time of Jesus. Rausch states:

For Palestinian Jews of the time of Jesus, sickness or infirmity was attributed to demonic power (Luke 13: 10 - 16) and sin (John 9: 1 - 3). Jesus' exorcisms (Mark 1: 23 - 28, 3: 23 - 27) and his healings show that with the arrival of the reign of God the power of evil over human beings was being broken; God's salvific power was becoming effective in the bodies and spirits of the people to whom he ministered.¹⁰³

The New Testament recognizes that in some cases sin can be the causing factor of sickness in which the forgiveness of sin is the means of healing (Mark 2: 5; 1 Corinthians 11: 30; James 5: 15 - 16). However, two factors radically modify any simplistic view of sickness caused by sin.¹⁰⁴ One is Jesus' explicit rejection of any necessary connection between sin and sickness in John 9: 1 - 3. A second factor is the attribution of certain sickness to Satan and to evil spirits or demons.

Wilkinson comments that the concern of Jesus is for the whole person to be saved, that salvation is frequently physical as well mental and spiritual (Mark 5: 28, 34; 6: 56; 10:

¹⁰⁰ Berkouwer 1965:69-70

¹⁰¹ Asamoah, 2005:177

¹⁰² Ibid., 167.

¹⁰³ Rausch 2003:86

¹⁰⁴ Wilkinson 1971:333

52).¹⁰⁵ This goes in the same line of thought as Horsley (1987:181-190), who sees the miracles as actions of liberation against oppressive social, economic, religious, and political structures of the first century.¹⁰⁶

In comparing Christ's healing power to that of African traditional healers, Phobee explains that Jesus is a superior healer because He was in a "perpetual state of holiness, perpetually ensouled with God so much that the divine power was like a continuously flowing electric power in him, unlike the traditional healer, who has the occasional experience of it."¹⁰⁷ In other words, Jesus Christ is the supreme healer. According to Shortes, Christ's holistic healing was a central theme in His life and His work. Thus the African should consult Jesus Christ, the supreme healer, for all his ills - both physical and social.¹⁰⁸

Exorcisms and healings constitute a major part of Jesus' ministry.¹⁰⁹ Healings, as distinct from exorcisms, are found in all four Gospels, which provide examples of the cure by Jesus of various types of illnesses, with leprosy, blindness, and paralysis being the most common.¹¹⁰

Jesus' exorcisms and healings are seen in the Gospels as signs of the in-breaking of God's Kingdom. The exorcisms are understood in terms of a battle between the forces of Satan and the forces of God; only a power opposed to Satan and stronger than him can cast out his agents (Mark 3:22-27), but the stronger power of God's kingdom is present in and through Jesus (Matt 12:28; cf. Luke 11:20). The new age in which the deaf hear, the blind see, the dumb speak, and the lame walk is now here; Jesus' healings "are not just 'wonders' but are signs that the day of salvation promised in the Old Testament has begun to dawn".¹¹¹

According to Seccombe (2002:291-294), the miracles of Jesus were characterized by the

¹⁰⁵ Wilkinson 1971:334

¹⁰⁶ Horsley 1987:181-190

¹⁰⁷ Phobee 1979:93

¹⁰⁸ Mugabe 1991:346

¹⁰⁹ Richardson 1941: 59-60

¹¹⁰ Seybold and Mueller 1981:138-48

¹¹¹ Richardson 1941: 38-40

fact that they were done sometimes by ‘a word of command’ (Mark 4: 35 - 41; 2: 1 - 12; Luke 17: 12 - 19), sometimes ‘by touch’ as many sick people were brought to him to be touched for their healing, and “on a few occasions Jesus employed some intermediate means, as when he sat and touched the tongue of the man who had a speech impediment (Mark 7: 33), when he spat on the eyes of the blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8: 22ff.), and when he sent another blind man to wash in the pool of Siloam (John 9: 7).”¹¹² Seccombe observes that Jesus performed many miracles without prayer, with one exception in John 11: 41 - 42. Many of Christ’s miracles were done ‘out of compassion’ (Mark 6: 31-51; 8: 1 - 10), and finally, the miracles in cases of healing were done ‘as a response to faith’ (Matt. 11:28; Mark 10:14; John 6:37).¹¹³

3.4 CONTEMPORARY MEANING OF THE PROPHETIC OFFICE OF CHRIST

In this section of the contemporary meaning of Christ prophetic office, we need to consider the fact that the prophetic office of Christ was not only related to His state of humiliation, but also to His state of exaltation. After His ascension, Christ continued His prophetic office through the Holy Spirit by inspiring the New Testament and by empowering the believers from the apostles to today’s Christians to preach the good news, to heal the sick and to cast out evil spirits.

The prophetic ministry of Christ continues through the Church. The four Gospels demonstrate how the Church has been commissioned for this prophetic office. In Matthew 28:18-20 we read how Jesus delegates His disciples in saying “All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Schaller, speaking of Christ's prophetic work today, in his book *Biblical Christology*, comments:

Whenever and wherever preached, the gospel is his word and he is the prophet, as he spoke aforetime by the mouths of his prophets (Luke 1: 70, 1 Peter 1: 10 - 11, Hebrews 1: 1), so he has now charged his Church with the mission to proclaim his gospel, in his power and with the assurance of his

¹¹² Seccombe 2002:291-294

¹¹³ Ibid.

invisible, bodily presence unto the end of days (Mt 28: 18 - 20). In pursuance of his plan, he not only appointed his apostles to be his inspired witnesses and authoritative teachers of the truth for all generations to come (Mark 16: 15; John 20: 21, Acts 1: 8), but he also continues to bless his Church with gifts of persons qualified by their endowment to carry on the work (Eph. 4: 8 - 12, 1 Cor. 12: 18, Mt. 9: 37f). In a peculiar and unique sense, the word of the apostles is the word of Christ himself (Isaiah 52: 6; Luke 10: 16; John 13: 20). But the same is true of the preaching of all servants of the Church as far as they take their message from the recorded word of Christ.¹¹⁴

Grudem, writing about our prophetic role, points out that it is in our proclaiming the gospel to the world and in teaching God's word that we fulfil the "prophetic" function.¹¹⁵

Thus, in the context of Africa, the church, which is the agent through which Christ's prophetic office by the Holy Spirit continues to function, is called to bear witness to the gospel in an Africa characterized by a diverse set of opportunities, challenges, and problems. Among the problems, we have already mentioned the following: Social and economic injustices; crime; child abuse; ecological destruction; racial, and gender discrimination, etc. The church is compelled to respond imaginatively and creatively to these concerns that the whole African continent is facing.

Our approach as the church to the following issues is grounded in our grateful response to the grace of God who creates us, redeems us, and calls us to stewardship. We need seek to embrace God's mission in creative, redemptive, and faithful obedience to our call to discipleship. We need to engage these issues not with the presumption that there can be simple resolution to the injustices that surround us, but with the deep desire to be in solidarity with the marginalised and hurting. We learn this commitment from the incarnation itself; from God's very entrance into, and solidarity with, the human condition in the person of Jesus Christ, and especially in Christ's prophetic office as He sympathized with the outcast and the poor of society.

Therefore, if the church has to be faithful in carrying the prophetic office of Christ, it must go beyond simplistic dichotomies of dividing human experience into secular and spiritual; soul and body. These dualities often manifest themselves in setting one against

¹¹⁴ Schaller 1981: 140-141

¹¹⁵ Grudem 1994:630

the other or glorifying one at the cost of vilifying the other. For example, we have lived as though nature has to be exploited because it is material and temporal. This is the line of thought that has resulted in a sharp divide in the church's participation in justice and the mission of God in the African context.

Our approach to the following issues is grounded in our grateful response to the grace of God who creates us, redeems us, and calls us to stewardship. We engage in these matters, not with the presumption that there can be simple resolution to the injustices that surround us, but with the deep desire to be in solidarity with the marginalised and hurting. We learn this commitment from the incarnation itself; God's very entrance into, and solidarity with, the human condition in the person of Jesus Christ.

3.4 SUMMARY

The discovery of our investigation in this chapter can be summarised as follows:

1. We have found out that the prophetic office of Christ has its origin in the Old Testament, where the prophets were called and anointed by the Holy Spirit to speak to people on the behalf of God. Thus Christ was appointed by God and anointed by the Holy Spirit, as Jesus himself claims that "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4: 18 - 19).
2. We have discovered that though all the prophets of the Old Testament have foreshadowed the prophetic office of Christ, Moses the Law giver, the first covenant mediator and the Jewish deliverer, is the ideal prophet through which the prophetic office of Christ can be well understood.
3. It has also been pointed out that the function of Christ's prophetic office was characterised by the preaching of the kingdom of God, of repentance, and of the love of God and neighbour. The preaching of the kingdom of God was accompanied by the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit in healing the sick, expelling evil spirits and

by performing many different miraculous signs as vindication of the identity of Christ and as a sign of the arrival of the kingdom of God.

4. Finally, in the contemporary meaning of Christ's prophetic office, we have seen that Christ continues to exercise His prophetic office in His state of exaltation, through the work of the Holy Spirit in equipping the church to carry on His prophetic office through Christ's written word by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. He is also the one who continues to convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16: 8).

4. THE MESSIANIC PRIESTLY OFFICE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, we have attempted to discuss the different aspects of the messianic prophetic office. In this chapter, we will attempt to discuss how the Old Testament was used in the theological discourse about Christ's priestly office. Since in the Old Testament there were two different orders in which the priesthood were exercised, we will discuss the order in which Christ's priestly office has its origin. Then we will go on to discuss Christ's role in His priestly office, and the theological meaning of Atonement and the contemporary meaning of Christ's priestly office.

In many African cultures God is perceived as transcendent and unapproachable. This has led many black Africans to rely on their ancestors for mediation to God. This almost seems to be the case with the Jews, for whom the one most holy and all powerful God could not be approached without the mediation of people called priests.

Berkhof writes that whereas a prophet represents God before humankind, a priest represents humankind before God.¹¹⁶ Grudem explains that "In the Old Testament, the priests were appointed by God to offer sacrifices. They also offered prayers and praise to God on behalf of the people. In so doing, they sanctified the people or made them acceptable to come into God's presence, albeit in a limited way, during the Old Testament period. In the New Testament Jesus becomes our high priest."¹¹⁷

4.2 BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF PRIESTLY OFFICE

In this section, we are going to explore the original meaning of the Messianic priestly office in the Old Testament and in Jewish community, and its application to Christ in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, the priestly office was instituted under the Mosaic Law. Aaron was the first high priest, and the holders of the office of priest were his descendants.

¹¹⁶ Berkhof 1959:35

¹¹⁷ Grudem 1994:626

Moses was directed to consecrate Aaron in a ceremony that involved sacrifice, washing with water, dressing with special garments, and anointing with oil (Exodus 29: 1 - 9). Because anointing was an essential part of this ritual, the high priest could be inferred to as an anointed priest, or the Messiah. In Leviticus 21: 10 he is referred to as the priest who is exalted above his fellows, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured. The Levites were the tribe of Israel designated by God to serve the other tribes. They had specific functions to perform, some of which were: “You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the Lord has given them through Moses” (Leviticus 10: 10 – 11).

The Levites were selected to teach Israel the Law of God given through Moses. From the tribe of Levi, God selected the family of Aaron to serve in the Tabernacle (and later in the Temple) to perform the ritual sacrifices and other duties in the Law of Moses at designated times and places (Exodus 28: 1; Numbers 28: 1 – 2).¹¹⁸

A priest therefore serves the people, performing ritual acts and religious rites on their behalf to the deity, most often within a sanctified site or temple of some kind. The Levitical priests of Israel had four characteristics: A priest was (1) chosen of God, (2) the property of God, (3) holy to God, and (4) he offered gifts to God, and received gifts from God in return.¹¹⁹ At the top of the hierarchy of the Levitical-Aaronic priesthood was the high priest of Israel, who was chosen to that position: “For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way [those who are straying]; for that, he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this [priestly] honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (Hebrews 5: 1 – 4).

a. The high priest's function

¹¹⁸ See Dr. Martin's presentation on “The Sacrificial System in Ancient Israel” at www.askelm.com/doctrine/d950502.htm.

¹¹⁹ “Priest” in *Faussett Bible Dictionary*, Circa. 1888. Electronic edition by International Bible Translators (IBT), Inc., 1998

To the question “What functions did the high priest perform?”, Letham insightfully explains: “Firstly, the high priest was the representative of Israelites before God; the breastplate that he wore with the onyx stones on which were engraved the names of the children of Israel that he might bear them before the Lord continually (Exodus 28: 17 - 21, 29), indicated that he was there on behalf of the people with whom Yahweh had entered into covenant.”¹²⁰

Secondly, “he (the high priest) had prophetic functions.” After the death of Moses, the high priest became the great medium of communication between God and the people (Num. 27: 21 - 23). The means of communication were principally kept up by the Urim and the Thumim. “These were also kept in the breastplate (Exodus 28: 30; Lev 18: 8). With the aid of these, he could declare the will of Yahweh on a given matter. Once the prophet appeared, these objects fell into disuse. Possibly the direct revelation of the will of Yahweh through the prophet made them obsolete. After the exile, however, the national leader wanted them restored (Ezra 2: 63; Neh. 7: 65). These objects are closely related to the priest’s teaching role (Lev. 10: 9 - 11), indicating a certain overlap between priestly and prophetic functions.”

Thirdly, the high priest shared with all the priests the pronouncing of benediction on Israel, declaring the covenant blessing of Yahweh (Num. 6: 22 - 27).

Fourthly, the high priest played a major role in the ritual of the Day of Atonement (Lev.: 16). When, as the representative of God’s people, he made an annual atonement for their sins, the high priest was subject to additional restrictions to avoid ritual defilement (Lev. 21: 10 -15), so there is a frank recognition of the fact that the high priest himself is a sinful human being. Thus, on the Day of Atonement, he has first of all to offer a sin offering for himself (Lev. 16 :6, 11; cf., 4: 3 - 12). It was, in essence, an expiatory and propitiatory function.

b. Messiah as the High Priest

The Old Testament had predicted the coming of the Messiah as God through the Psalmist

¹²⁰ Letham 1993:106-107

(Psalm 110:4): “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.’” Zechariah goes on to write, “It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.” Referring to these passages, Berkhof comments that “the Old Testament predicts and prefigures the priesthood of the coming redeemer. There are clear references to it in Ps. 110: 4 and Zech. 6: 13. Moreover, the Old Testament priesthood, and particularly, the high priest, clearly pre-figures a priestly Messiah.”¹²¹

The vision of Zechariah 4: 11 - 14 also speaks of two “anointed ones”, or Messiahs, Zerubbabel (a Davidic king) and Joshua (a high priest). By applying the title “anointed” to the high priest, the text also paved the way for the expectation for a priestly messiah figure. In Zechariah 3: 8 Joshua, the high priest is told, “You and your colleague ... are an omen of things to come. I am going to bring my servant, the Branch.” Here the Messiah “Branch” is a priestly figure, modelled on the person of a high priest.¹²²

The book of Hebrews is the only book of the New Testament to have applied explicitly the office of priest to Christ, although Christ’s function as a high priest is mentioned implicitly in the other parts of the New Testament.¹²³ Nevertheless, the book of Hebrews repeatedly writes of Christ as the high priest. It applies Psalm 110: 4 to Christ (Hebrews 6: 20). However, it has been suggested by many scholars that the origin of Christ as High Priest might have been traced in the Qumran Scrolls, in 1QS 9: 10 - 11, in which passage is referred ‘the coming of a Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel’¹²⁴ We have already seen that Thielicke (1977:347) pointed out that:

The difficulty posed by the traditional title increases when it is recalled that the messianic expectation of contemporary Judaism distinguished between different messianic figures. Thus some were waiting for both a royal and a priestly Messiah, while according to the Qumran texts the Essene community expected first the prophet (Deuteronomy 18: 15), then the Aaronic Messiah as

¹²¹ Berkhof 1959:361-362

¹²² Kaiser 1995:211-213

¹²³ Bruce 1964: lii

¹²⁴ Stendahl 1957: 54

the end-time high priest, and finally the eschatological king of the tribe of Judah and the house of David, the priestly Messiah taking precedence of the eschatological king

However, that priest and king could be linked in the person of Melchizedek. When the Royal Psalms are interpreted with reference to a messianic king, then Ps. 110:4, in which the king is told, “You are a priest forever to the order of Melchizedek,” can be interpreted as pointing to the messiah figure who would be both king and priest. The way Jesus quotes Ps. 110. 1 in disputing the teaching of the scribes (Mark 12. 35 ff.) clearly assumes that the Psalm was interpreted in a messianic perspective in Jesus’ day. Cullmann (1959: 84) says, “When Jesus quotes Ps. 110 in Mark 12: 35 ff. to show that the Messiah’s Davidic sonship is problematical, he clearly presupposes that the king addressed in the psalm (the king who is at the same time a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek) is to be understood as the Messiah.” Cullmann (1959:88-89) continues to point out that:

When Jesus answers the high priest in Mark 14: 62, he combines a reference to Daniel 7 with the reference to Psalm 110: ‘You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven’ ‘Sitting at the right hand’ is inseparably connected with the thought of the priest-king after the order of Melchizedek. Is it not significant that Jesus applies to himself a saying about the eternal High Priest precisely when he stands before the Jewish high priest and is questioned by him concerning his claim to be the Messiah? He says, in effect, that his messiahship is not that of an earthly messiah ... but that he is the heavenly Son of Man and the heavenly High Priest.

Just as Jesus acknowledged before Pilate (John 18: 36 – 37) that he was born to be a king, Jesus admitted before the high priest that he was indeed the expected Messiah, the Son of Man; but He went further and indicated that He was a heavenly high priest by quoting Psalm 110. That being the case, in what way could Jesus have been a high priest? He could not have been a Levitical priest because He was not from the tribe of Levi, as the book of Hebrews 7:13-14 explains: “He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no-one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests.”

Latham shows that “This impasse was overcome for the author of Hebrews by recourse to

the priesthood of Melchizedek. The enigmatic character, Melchizedek, appears briefly in Gen. 14 18-20. On Abram's return after the battle of the kings, Melchizedek blessed him. He received tithes and refreshed him with bread and wine. Melchizedek's significance is that he was sacral king, combining kingly and priestly offices in one person. He was king of Salem as well as priest of God most High. No account is given of how Melchizedek became a priest."¹²⁵ Latham continues: "The Melchizedek high priesthood, however, was realized in Christ. The author of Hebrews had a sure sense of the structure and flow of redemptive history. As a result, it matters not that Christ was of the tribe of Judah, from whom no priests were taken in Israel. He was not an Aaronic priest at all. His tribe was based in Jerusalem, at which place Melchizedek had been priest-king"¹²⁶

It is interesting to observe that in the Old Testament, apart from Genesis 14:18 where Melchizedek is clearly mentioned, the second place where he is found is in Psalm 110: 4, referred to by King David as a "priest forever in the order of Melchizedek", seemingly without any context. There is a context but it is unrecognized. It is noteworthy to realize that from the time after Genesis 14: 18 until King David, the control of Jerusalem (Salem) was in the hands of Gentiles and not God's people. When King David conquered Jerusalem, the city of Jebus, the stronghold of Zion, he named it the "city of David" (2 Samuel 5: 7, 9). Salem, Zion, Jebus, and the City of David are all older names for the city of Jerusalem. When he conquered and took possession of Jerusalem, the king David became "the King of Salem" just like Melchizedek. In addition, by virtue of becoming King of Salem, David also became a priest of the order of Melchizedek, as seen in Psalm 110: 4. David evidently claimed the right to exercise priestly as well as kingly functions (cf. 2 Samuel 6: 13 - 14; 8: 18); by his conquest of Jerusalem he had become successor of the priest-kings of the city.¹²⁷

We have already seen that Psalm 110 was also a messianic prophecy about a future Messiah who was to be seated at God's right hand, and who would also be a priest "after the order of Melchizedek." King and priest are the dual roles for the person who was the object of Psalm 110. Christ also has a dual role as king and priest. He applied Psalm 110

¹²⁵ Latham 1993:107-108

¹²⁶ Ibid., 110

¹²⁷ Ringgren 1956:15

to himself in Mark 14: 61 – 64.

Hence, at Pentecost, the apostle Peter (Acts 2: 30 - 36) rightly claimed that Psalm 110 directly applied to Jesus' resurrection and to events at Pentecost. Peter summoned his strongest argument that Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead. Peter said that Psalm 110 was fulfilled at that very moment with Jesus Christ (the Messiah) seated at the right hand of the Father. David was dead, buried and in his tomb, still waiting for his fulfilment.

The two-fold role of king and priest in Psalm 110 referred prophetically to the coming Messiah, but its original message was from God to David (postponed until Christ's return). The word Messiah means "anointed" and David was a Messiah by virtue of his being the anointed king of Israel, and by right of conquest, he was the king of Salem. David therefore had three roles as a Prophet, a Priest, and a King — a complete type for the future Messiah on all points. Christ was and is today the priest-king. Psalm 110 therefore has a two-fold application, first to David and then to the future Messiah, Jesus Christ.

In the matter of relating the high priestly office of Old Testament to Christ, Letham concludes by stating that:

There were in the Old Testament not one order of priests, but two. In the Aaronic high priesthood there was an explicit separation from the royal office, whereas in the Melchizedek high priesthood there was fusion of powers. The Aaronic high priesthood was time-bound. Legitimacy depended upon being born into the line of Aaron, so there was a built-in provision for succession based on heredity. He was subject to death, and the deaths of the various incumbents were meticulously recorded. In contrast, the Melchizedek high priest was an eternal priesthood. It was established by irrevocable oath of Yahweh.¹²⁸

Melchizedek is without genealogy, and because he has no end of life nor beginning of life, the priesthood which he possesses comes about not through priestly succession, but through the very infinite quality of that life (Hebrews 7: 16). Christ is a priest "according to the order of Melchizedek" in that He is "according to the likeness" of Melchizedek

¹²⁸ Letham 1993:108-109

(Hebrews 7: 15). Melchizedek has no successor in the priesthood. Every feature of significance in Melchizedek's priesthood is recapitulated on a grander scale in Christ's priesthood.

4.3 CHRIST THE MESSIANIC HIGH PRIEST

a. Introduction

We have seen that a prophet is one who is qualified and authorized to speak to God for humankind. A priest, by way of contrast, is one who is qualified and authorized to stand on behalf of humankind before of God. Humankind in his fallen position is a guilty sinner, in open and defiant rebellion against God. He therefore has neither the right nor even the desire to come into God's presence. A priest is one who, acting on behalf of humankind, undertakes to restore the broken relations between God and humankind. In order to accomplish peace, a priest identifies himself with humankind, offers gifts and sacrifices to God in order to expiate the sin and make God propitious, and then, having gained access to God, intercedes on behalf of humankind. Since humankind in his fallen position is blinded by sin, he does not realize the utter hopelessness of his condition. His tendency is to put God out of his thoughts, to think that he is the master of his fate and the captain of his soul, and that he is able to turn from evil to good whenever he chooses. But his reasoning is based on deception. Thus, if he is to be saved, it is necessary for God to take the initiative and rescue him. This, the scriptures tell us, is precisely what God has done. Entirely at His own cost, and through pure grace alone, God has provided a system of redemption. The apostle Paul says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). And then he says, "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" (Romans 5: 10)

In this section, I will attempt to investigate briefly Christ's work in His High Priestly office, and then review some theories of atonement.

b. Christ's role as High Priest

In answer to the question, “How does Christ execute the office of priest?” Wainwright quotes the Westminster Shorter Catechism, saying that: “Christ executes the office of a priest, in his once offering up of himself as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us.”¹²⁹ Bruce shows that for Christ to be our High Priest, there were some requirements to fulfilled referring to Hebrews 5: 1 - 10, as the High Priest was be able to sympathize with the ones whose cause he represents (5: 1 - 3), and had to receive the divine appointment to the Priestly office (5: 4); so Christ, in being divinely appointed (5: 5, 6, 10), and in sympathizing with the ones whom He represents, fulfilled the requirement (5: 7 - 10).¹³⁰

In the Epistle to the Hebrews (4: 14 to 10: 18), the author presents some characteristics of the priesthood of Christ. He shows that the priesthood of Christ rests on His true humanity. By virtue of this Christ is able to represent mankind before God (2: 14 - 18; 4: 14 to 5: 9). It also rests on the sacrifice He offers. In contrast, to the limited power of sacrifices offered under the Old Covenant (10: 1, 2), that which Christ offers is perfect and final (9: 26). The author of this book also shows that Christ is both priest, offering the sacrifice, and the sacrifice itself (7: 27 and 9: 14). The priestly work of Christ is also seen in His present work of intercession for us. This intercession is made on the merits of His completed work for sin (7: 25, 9: 24; cf. Rom. 6: 34).

The New Testament makes it clear that Christ is our High Priest; He has performed the function of offering Himself as a sacrifice and intercedes effectively with God on our behalf. The supreme purpose of His coming, the writer of the epistles to the Hebrews (9:26) tells us, was “to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Especially, He offered himself through death and suffering on the cross as a sacrifice to God to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God, and in such a manner that He was at one and the same time both the sacrifice and the Priest who offered it. The epistle to the Hebrews is in fact concerned almost exclusively with showing that He is our great High Priest and that it is through His sacrifice that our salvation has been made possible. “Therefore, since we have a great high Priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not a high priest who is unable to

¹²⁹ Wainwright, 1997:100

¹³⁰ Bruce (1964:88-92)

sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are - yet was without sin. Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (Heb. 4: 14 - 16)

This is the function of a high priest, to approach God, advocate for the people, and in the case of Jesus, to help us obtain mercy and grace when we need it most. Christ also mediates by representing His righteousness to God as our righteousness.

The work of Christ is commonly spoken of as the Atonement.¹³¹ The subject of the atonement embraces much more than the subject of Christ’s suffering on the cross. In addition to Christ’s death, the work of atonement involves the incarnation, His sinless life, obedience “unto death”, His triumphant resurrection, His ascension, and His intercessory work. It is in the Cross that all these things find their necessary point of focus, but they are as essential to atonement as the Cross itself.¹³² Brunner writes:

The priestly work of Christ, the Atonement, the grace of God in Jesus Christ which justifies sinners, culminates, it is true, in the death of Jesus on the Cross, but it does not begin there. The whole life of Jesus, including His teaching, is merciful God stretching out His hands to His rebellious, lost creation. The whole life of Jesus is the self-giving of the Holy for sinful humanity.¹³³

4.4 THEOLOGICAL MEANING OF CHRIST’S ATONING WORK

The doctrine of atonement has been one of the most controversial subjects in the history of Christianity. It has been said that Christianity is the only religion to have as its central event the humiliation of its God.

In fact, the idea of atonement presupposes a reciprocal relationship between God and humankind, resulting in true worship where obedience and trust are shown on humankind’s part, and providence and communion are given on God’s part. Bearing in

¹³¹ Stroup 1982:97; Peters 1992:202-203

¹³² Cave, 1950:88)

¹³³ Brunner 1952:281

mind the breaking of humankind's relationship with God in Genesis 3, the atonement has to do with the Divine-humankind relationship, and is concerned with the removal of the hindrances to fellowship between God and humankind.

- **Definition of Atonement**

Prior to its status as a technical theological term, the English word, "atonement" was first employed by William Tyndale to translate *katallage* – the Greek word for "reconciliation." His emphasis was on the "at-one-ment" effected by God in Christ.¹³⁴ The English word atonement is derived from the two words "at- onement" and denotes a state of togetherness and agreement between two people. Atonement presupposes two parties that are estranged, with the act of atonement being the reconciliation of them into a state of harmony. The theological meaning is the reconciliation between God and sinful human being. This reconciliation is achieved through the death of Christ.¹³⁵

The atonement is that necessary satisfaction of the demands of God as holy love, which He Himself, in the person of the God-man, has provided by the voluntary penal suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ as the substitute for sinners. This is done on the grounds that all who by the Holy Spirit believe in Him are brought into a new standing with God, are given spiritual peace, receive power to live a holy life and are granted the assurance of an everlasting inheritance in the Kingdom of heaven.¹³⁶

- **The Basis for Atonement**

The word 'atonement' describes "what has occurred between human beings and God, but on its own does not necessarily connote how it has occurred". In order to adequately answer the question, "What is atonement?" we must ask the more fundamental question, "What is the problem of humanity's alienation or estrangement or separation for which Christ's atoning work is the solution?"¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Sherman, 2004:10

¹³⁵ Atkinson, 1967:18. 'Atonement' in Alan Richardson (ed.). A Dictionary of Christian Theology (London)

¹³⁶ Grudem 1994:570-571

¹³⁷ Sherman, 2004:10

The problem is understood from a threefold perspective – human bondage to external powers of evil, internal impurity through human sinfulness, and tragic human limitations that arise from life in a fallen world. Firstly, the problem is external to us: We are “held in bondage by powers in some sense external to us and greater than we are”¹³⁸. Secondly, our problem is also internal: “We are not so much victims of evil as perpetrators of evil”.¹³⁹ Thirdly, our problem arises from our finite “fallen” context and inherent human limitations that leave us weak, ignorant, and lost. All of these things separate us from God and call for atonement.

The sin of humanity constitutes a chasm between humans and God. And there could be no true reconciliation between man and God until that chasm was bridged or removed. So, the idea of atonement presupposed a relationship between God and humankind. This relationship between God and humankind and between humankind and God is foundational to the whole experience of worship. But sin has marred and hindered that relationship.

The question arises: ‘Under what conditions can the relationship between God and humankind can be restored?’ It is important to realize that there are hindrances both on humanity’s side (fear, distrust, enmity) and on God’s side (wrath because of sin). What is the nature of this relationship? The distinctive thing about the Christian religion is that it regards God as personal, and that He enters into personal relationship with man (Genesis 1: 26; John 17: 3). God is Creator and humankind His creature. Since both God and humankind are personal, the relationship sustained between them must likewise be personal. The expression of this personal relationship is in the form of obedience and trust on the part of human, and in the form of providence and the giving of fellowship on the part of God - expressed so frequently in the Old Testament by the words ‘steadfast love’ and ‘faithfulness’.

The atonement can be expressed thus:

UNION - there is a certain true relationship between God and human.

DISUNION- sin marred and hindered that relationship.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 2004:12

¹³⁹ Ibid., 13

REUNION - how can that relationship be restored?¹⁴⁰

It is precisely the questions arising from these conditions, which constitutes the complexities of the atonement.¹⁴¹

Calvin posed the question: “Suppose a man learns that he was estranged from God through sin, is an heir of wrath, subject to the curse of eternal death, excluded from all hope of salvation, beyond every blessing of God, the slave of Satan, captive under the yoke of sin, destined finally for a dreadful destruction and already involved in it; and that at this point Christ interceded as his advocate, took upon himself and suffered the punishment that, from God’s righteous judgment, threatened all sinners; that he purged with his blood those evils which has rendered sinners hateful to God; that by this expiation he made satisfaction and sacrifice duly to God the Father; that as intercessor he has appeased God’s wrath; that on this foundation rests the peace of God with humans; that by this bond his benevolence is maintained toward them. Will the humankind not then be even more moved by all these things which so vividly portray the greatness of the calamity from which he has been rescued?”¹⁴² Calvin continued:

This is our acquittal: the guilt that held us liable for punishment has been transferred to the head of the Son of God (Is. 53: 12). We must, above all, remember this substitution, lest we tremble and remain anxious throughout life — as if God’s righteous vengeance, which the Son of God has taken upon himself, still hung over us.¹⁴³

And again, Calvin wrote:

By his obedience, however, Christ truly acquired and merited grace for us with his father. Many passages of Scripture surely and firmly attest this. I take it to be a commonplace that if Christ made satisfaction for our sins, if he paid the penalty owed by us, if he appeased God by his obedience — in short, if as a righteous man he suffered for unrighteous men — then he acquired salvation for us by his righteousness, which is tantamount to deserving it.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Murray, J., 1961, chap.1, Redemption Accomplished and Applied, for the necessity of the Atonement (Banner of Truth)

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Calvin (Inst. II. Xvi.2)

¹⁴³ Ibid., II.xvi.5

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., II.xvii.3

- **The theories of Atonement**

My attempt in this section is to review briefly the three main theories of the atonement set forth at different times in the history of the church, and how the church has understood the achievement of Christ in His Priestly office, particularly in His work of atonement.

The following theories of Atonement will be briefly reviewed: 1. The Ransom to Satan, 2. The Satisfaction to God (Commercial Theory), 3. The Moral Influence

Aulén writes that:

The subject of the Atonement is absolutely central in Christian theology, and it is directly related to that of the nature of God. Each and every interpretation of the Atonement is most closely connected with some conception of the essential meaning of Christianity, and reflects some conception of the Divine nature.¹⁴⁵

(1) The Ransom to Satan Theory

The New Testament stresses that Jesus came to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10: 45; Matthews 20: 28), for all (Timothy 2: 5 - 6). Jesus gave his life as a ransom, and this gift is clearly given freely and from a heart of love. The Gospel references stress Jesus' servant quality in offering the gift of Himself. However, the New Testament offers little information or theological detail as to how the ransom works. This has left the door open to theological speculation in trying to understand how the ransom works.

Thus, in investigating the question: "To whom was the ransom- price paid"?¹⁴⁶ Origen (185-254 AD) comments:

To whom did He give His soul as a ransom for many? Surely not to God; could it, then, be to the Evil One? For he had us in his power, until the ransom for us should be given to him, even the life (or soul) of Jesus, since he (the Evil one) has been deceived, and led to suppose that he was capable of mastering that soul, and he did not see that to hold Him involved a trial of

¹⁴⁵ Aulén 1975:12-13

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 49

strength greater than he was equal to.¹⁴⁷

Origen had taught that the Devil was overcome by deception, or as we would prefer to say today, he over-reached himself in his attack upon Christ. In Origen's thought the Devil took the life of Jesus as a ransom because he did not know its inherent power. He finds a hint of this in 1 Corinthians 2: 7 - 8 — if the rulers of this age, the demonic powers, had perceived who Christ was they would not have crucified him. Satan was defeated by deception; he thought he could control the world of men by accepting the soul of Christ in exchange for theirs. But he was deceived by God and found that he could not hold Jesus. The Cross which appeared to be his victory was turned into defeat by the resurrection. Gregory of Nyssa uses the picture of the hook and a bait. He says, "God, in order to render himself accessible to him who demanded of him a ransom for us, concealed himself under the veil of our nature, in order that, as happens with greedy fishes, together with the bait of the fish, the hook of the Godhead might also be swallowed". Gregory defends the rightness and justice of this by saying that "it is nothing but just when he who led us astray is paid back in his own coin; for just as he at the beginning beguiled humans with the bait of fleshly lust, he is now beguiled through God clothing himself in the veil of humanity."¹⁴⁸

Gregory of Nyssa held that God had to be just to the Devil within whose power humankind had placed himself by the fall. Humankind had sold himself to the Devil, and therefore the Devil had rights over him. "The Devil, therefore, had a right to adequate compensation if he were to surrender him." God accordingly, had to find not an arbitrary method of recovery, but one consonant with justice. In short, Christ gave himself up as ransom to the devil.¹⁴⁹

Thus, the theory of the ransom paid to Satan was advocated in different ways by Origen (c. 185-254), Gregory of Nyssa (331-96), Augustine (in part) (345-430), and Pope Gregory the Great (640-604).¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Cave, 1950: 94-98

¹⁴⁹ Kelly, J., 1956:381

¹⁵⁰ MacDonald, H., 1968, chap.12 The Atonement of the Death of Christ, "The Payment of the Ransom."

Gregory of Nazianzus protests against the idea of ransom paid to the Devil and denied that the Devil has any rights at all. He nevertheless regarded Christ's death as the means by which the Devil was defeated and mankind delivered:

It is not fitting that the devil, who is a robber, should receive a price in return for what he had taken by violence, and a price of such value as the Son of God Himself. The devil had no rights; on the contrary, it was altogether right that he should be conquered and forced to surrender his prey.¹⁵¹

Aulén made a careful study of what he calls the 'classical idea' of the Atonement, i.e. the work of Christ conceived as a victory over the Devil. His book *Christus Victor* (1975) is essentially a historical study of the three main types of the idea of Atonement, the classic idea, the Latin theory and the subjective theories. Pointing out that the Classic Theory has been largely abandoned, he attempts an examination of it, urging that we must penetrate to the idea behind the mythological language used to express that idea. Beginning with Irenaeus, he draws out the fact that the classic idea of atonement gives full weight to 'a necessary double-sidedness' which constitutes a full understanding of atonement: "God is at once the Reconciler and the Reconciled. His enmity is taken away in the very act in which he reconciles the world unto himself." Another 'double aspect' he points out is in the idea of ransom – "deliverance from the powers of death and the proceeds to devil is at the same time deliverance from God's judgment on sin." Aulén shows that Luther himself held a classical view of the atonement, seeing Christ's victory not only as over the Devil, but also over the Law and the wrath of God. Although he claims to be writing an historical survey without attempting an apologetic for the 'classic idea', he does conclude by indicating that he believes the classic idea to have "emerged with Christianity itself, and on that ground alone cannot be refused a claim ... to embody that which is most genuinely Christian."

The theme of *Christus Victor*, which Aulen champions, is of particular importance to modern African theologians aiming at conveying, intelligibly, Christ's significance for an African world peopled with demonic forces. Mbiti says "forces and powers are at work in the world which threaten the interests of life and harmony. The portrait of Jesus as Christus Victor answers to the need for a powerful protector against these forces and

¹⁵¹ Aulén 1975: 49-50

powers.”¹⁵² Thus “Christ is conqueror of those evil powers...feared by the African and is guarantor of immortality.”¹⁵³ This point is crucial in the quest for an African view of the atonement that is Christologically grounded.

(2) Satisfaction to God

The theory of Satisfaction to God was advocated by Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109 AD) in his book *Cur Deus Homo?* (*Why did God Become Man?*). According to Denny, this book is “the truest and the greatest book on the atonement that has ever been written.”¹⁵⁴ McClendon points out that Anselm’s book “has shaped Western religious thought on this topic as perhaps no other outside of scripture.”¹⁵⁵ Anselm regarded the atonement as a satisfaction which was absolutely necessary to make. The ground of this absolute necessity of atonement is the honour of God. God may not pass by the transgression of man without some compensation being made in respect of the affront to his honour which man’s sin has brought about. The vindication of the Divine honour could be accomplished either by punishment or by satisfaction. “The mercy of God prompted Him to seek it in the way of satisfaction, and more particularly through the gift of His Son, which was the only way, since an infinite satisfaction was required.”¹⁵⁶

For Anselm, since human was originally made for blessedness, the perfections of God imperatively demanded that human should not be allowed to perish, but be redeemed. Thus the only way by which human could be redeemed was by the atonement. This was the absolute necessity. “There is no way in which humanity can provide this necessary satisfaction. It lacks the resources which are needed. On the other hand, God possesses the resources needed to provide the required satisfaction. A ‘God- human’ would possess both the ability (as God) and the obligation (as a human) to pay the required satisfaction. Therefore the incarnation takes place, in order that the required satisfaction may be made, and humanity redeemed.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Mbiti 1972:54

¹⁵³ Nyamiti 1994:4

¹⁵⁴ Denny 1903:116

¹⁵⁵ McClendon 1994:203

¹⁵⁶ Berkhof 1959:385

¹⁵⁷ McGrath 2001: 420

In the criticism of Anselm's theory of atonement, Mozley comments that although it is quite plausible that Anselm was aided in his satisfaction theory by the Latin idea of the penance, with its practice of making an offering or payment to satisfy God's justice, and possibly also by the feudal system of his day, we cannot overlook his initiative in working out a systematic theology of the atonement as best as he understood it. Nevertheless, Anselm's theory has been criticized on grounds of an apparent dualism between the Father's justice and the Son's love, a quantitative view of sin being atoned for by the superabundance of Christ's offer, and overdependence on rational speculation rather than reliance on Scripture.¹⁵⁸

Anselm's theory of atonement did influence the Reformers to the point where they have embraced some of the Anselm's views. However, the Reformers went beyond Anselm's satisfaction theory by according it a penal interpretation. The teachings of Martin Luther (1483-1546 AD.) mark a shift from the idea of satisfaction to that of voluntary substitution. In his commentary on Galatians, Luther teaches that Christ became for us the greatest of all sinners because he assumed in His body the sins we had committed, making satisfaction for them by His own blood. With particular reference to Galatians 3: 13, Luther comments: "For just as Christ has died so that we might live, 'so has he been made sin, that we might be justified', and a 'curse' in order that we might be blessed."¹⁵⁹ Calvin (1509-1564 C.E.) endorses this viewpoint by teaching that Christ took upon Himself the tortures and condemnation that we should have suffered. In attaching special importance to the death of Christ, Calvin touches on its costly nature as the only effective means of meeting the requirements of God's justice. He writes: "Our doctrine is that justification is a thing of such value that it cannot be put into the balance with any good quality of ours, and therefore, could never be obtained unless it were gratuitous; moreover, that it is gratuitous to us, but not also to Christ who paid so dearly for it, namely, his own most sacred blood, out of which there was no price of sufficient value to pay what was due to the justice of God."¹⁶⁰

3. Moral Influence Theory

¹⁵⁸ Mozley 1947: 128-132

¹⁵⁹ Aulén 1975: 105

¹⁶⁰ Calvin, Institutes II 16.4 (Translation by H. Beveridge in an edition printed at Edinburgh by The Edinburgh Printing Company, 1845)

According to Stott, Abelard (1079-1142) was the most famous exponent of the ‘moral influence’ theory. Being a young contemporary of Anselm, He agreed with him in refuting and repudiating the view of the ransom paid to Satan. But he went on to oppose and reject Anselm’s view of the satisfaction for sin. In Abelard’s view, Christ died neither because a ransom had to be paid to Satan nor because of the blood of an innocent victim was needed to appease God’s wrath. Rather, his death was a supreme demonstration of love which has the effect of kindling a corresponding love in our hearts and spurring us on to true freedom as God’s children.¹⁶¹ Accordingly, Abelard views the purpose of the Incarnation as the instruction of human beings through the preaching and example of Christ.¹⁶² Aulén states that Abelard “emphasises especially that Christ is the great Teacher and Example, who arouses responsive love in humans; this love is the basis on which reconciliation and forgiveness rest.”¹⁶³ Stott points out that “although he (Abelard) continued to use traditional phrases like ‘redeemed by Christ’, ‘justified in his blood’, and ‘reconciled to God’, he interpreted the efficacy of Christ’s death in exclusively subjective terms. The voluntary self-sacrifice of the Son of God moves us to grateful love in response, and so to contribution and repentance.”¹⁶⁴

In short, Atonement in the history of Christian theology has been interpreted in various ways. It has been understood to refer to a cosmic battle fought between God and the devil, in which the latter is tricked and defeated by the crucified Jesus. Atonement has also been interpreted as a payment of a debt by Jesus on behalf of humanity. In this view, God’s justice has been offended by human sin and Jesus expiates the debt and satisfies God’s honour and justice by paying the penalty that sinful humanity could never offer on its own. The atonement has also been interpreted in less metaphysical categories as a force of moral influence or moral ideal. Thus interpreted, the cross is not so much a cosmic victory over the devil or the satisfaction of a legal debt as it is an event that should inspire the world and evoke faith.

Stott’s comment on the three main viewpoints on the theories of atonement is noteworthy

¹⁶¹ Stott 1986:217

¹⁶² Mozley 1947:132

¹⁶³ Aulén 1975:96

¹⁶⁴ Stott 1986:217

as he points out:

In fact all thereof of the major explanations of the death of Christ contain biblical truth and to some extent are harmonized, especially if we observe that the chief difference between them is that in each God's work in Christ is directed towards a different person. In the 'objective' view God satisfies Himself, in the 'subjective' he inspires us, and in the 'classic' he overcomes the devil. Thus Jesus Christ is successively the Saviour, the teacher and the Victor, because we ourselves are guilty, apathetic and in bondage.¹⁶⁵

Stroup goes on to comment that "There are some common themes in these interpretations of the atonement, but also some important differences; each of them understands sin and humanity's separation from God to be the problem addressed by Jesus cross and resurrection. Where they differ, of course, is in their interpretation of how sin is "overcome," and even more important, in the understanding of how Jesus' cross alters our relation to God and to each other. The outstanding claim made by scripture is that the death of this first century Jew does indeed alter relationship to God and the rest of the world."¹⁶⁶

In spite of the divergent perspectives on atonement among theologians, the fundamental point is that in Christ's atoning work, humanity has been reconciled to God.

In the following section, we will discuss how Christ continues his priestly office in His state of exaltation, and how believers are called to share in Christ's priestly office.

4.5 CONTEMPORARY MEANING OF CHRIST'S PRIESTLY OFFICE

In relating to the contemporary priestly function, Calvin states that: "Christ ... once for all offered a sacrifice of eternal expiation and reconciliation; now, having also entered the sanctuary of heaven, he intercedes for us. In him we are all priests (Revelation. 1: 6; cf. 1 Peter 2: 9), but to offer praises and thanksgiving, in short, to offer ourselves and ours to God. It was his office alone to appease God and atone for sins by his offering."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Stott 1986:230

¹⁶⁶ Stroup 1982: 97-98

¹⁶⁷ Calvin, (Inst. II, 1960:1476)

The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ annulled the Aaronic priesthood, as we have already pointed out. There is no need to continue offering up literal expiatory sacrifices. As the perfect Son of God and High Priest, Jesus established a new covenant (Hebrews 9: 15 - 22) with better promises (Hebrews 8: 6) when he offered himself (Hebrews 7: 27) as the perfect victim once for all (Hebrews 7: 27) as our substitute (Hebrews 7:27) and ransom (Hebrews 9: 15). By his death he took away our sins (Hebrews 9: 28), made us perfect (Hebrews 10: 14), obtained for us eternal redemption (Hebrews 9: 12), opened a new and living way in and through him to God's throne of grace, and sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 10: 12). He now invites every believer with a clean conscience (Hebrews 9: 14) to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 10: 19) to offer continually spiritual sacrifices (Hebrews 13: 15, 16) as priests in Christ.

Luther writes that everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ is a priest.¹⁶⁸ The concept that all who believe in Christ are priests occurred to Luther after he became convinced that Scripture was the only authority for a Christian. As he studied the Bible, especially Paul's Epistle to the Romans, he discovered that in and through Jesus Christ a believer possessed the righteousness of God, and therefore, immediate access to God without the mediation of a human priesthood. Thus, the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is a sequel to the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone. Those who are clothed in the perfect righteousness of God are welcome in the presence of God.

Calvin recognized that in Christ's priestly role every believer in Christ is received by the Father as His companion in this great office (Revelation 1:6). "For we who are defiled in ourselves, yet are priests in him, offer ourselves and our all to God, and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary that the sacrifices of prayers and praise that we bring may be acceptable and sweet-smelling before God."¹⁶⁹

Grudem goes on to write that "We are also priests, because Peter calls us 'a royal priesthood' (1 Peter 2: 9). He invites us to be built into a spiritual temple and 'to be a holy priesthood' as well as 'to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus

¹⁶⁸Luther 1896:399

¹⁶⁹ Calvin (Inst. I, 1960:502)

Christ.’ (1 Peter 2: 5).” Christ has made us “priests to His God and Father” (Revelation 1: 6). This enables us to have personal and direct access to the Father through Christ (Ephesians 2: 18), to enter the Holy of Holies through Christ (Hebrews 13: 16).¹⁷⁰

This is the great application the book of Hebrews gives us because Jesus is our high priest: “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4: 14 - 16). As Calvin points out, “[Christ] is our Pontiff ... [and] the altar upon which we lay our gifts.”¹⁷¹

4.6 SUMMARY

In the search of the meaning of the messianic priestly office of Christ, our discovery might be summarised as follows:

1. We have seen that the original priesthood for the children of Israel originated with Aaron and was to perpetuate through his lineage. But, Jesus’ priesthood is described in the book of Hebrews as of a new lineage, according to the order of Melchizedek. Nevertheless, the Aaronic priesthood foreshadows in many aspects Christ’s priestly office.

2. It has been pointed out that the main purpose of Christ in His priestly office is to reconcile us to God. So the ransom paid by Christ in His vicarious sacrificial death on the cross has reconciled us to God. And we have become priests in Christ and have access to God in His sanctuary with our sacrifices, prayers and praises.

3. We have also found out that the priestly office of Christ did not cease at the cross, but it continues forever. At the right hand of God the Father, Christ continues His priestly

¹⁷⁰ Grudem 1994:630

¹⁷¹ Calvin (Inst. II, 160:1445)

office in interceding for us.

4. In the theological development of the theory of atonement, we have briefly discussed the major theories of atonement as follows:

- In Christ the Victor, we have made reference to the view that in the atoning work of Christ, Christ has defeated the forces of evil.
- In the Satisfaction theory of atonement, we have made reference to the view that the death of Christ was an atoning work to satisfy God's justice against human' sin.
- Finally, in the Moral Influence theory, We have made reference to the view that God's perfect love for us in Christ inspires us to respond in gratitude and awe. Jesus is not just a moral and religious example of self-giving love, what the New Testament calls 'agape'. In His person and His work, and above all in His cross, He is the reality of agape. As the representative of humanity before God, He overcomes the sin that separates humanity from God, and from each other.

5. MESSIANIC KINGLY OFFICE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

According to the Bible, before the fall of Adam, Adam ruled in Eden as God's appointed representative. It was his duty to exercise representative authority over all creation, to have dominion over all things, and to subdue creation to the purposes of its Creator. After the fall Adam's original headship was in a corrupt state. By violating God's law he acted against his duty of subduing creation to the authority of the Creator. As a consequence, humankind lost its kingly position to its deceiver who is the Devil and found itself in slavery to the devil and to sin. Thus God promised to restore humankind's kingly position by defeating the deceiver through the seed of woman (Genesis 3:15). In 1John 3:8, we read "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." Jesus Himself did clearly state to His disciples before His ascension that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him (Matthew 28: 18). It did not take long before Peter went on to prove to his audience in his preaching at Pentecost that Jesus is the Messiah, 'the King'. Because he is the Messiah "God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36).¹

The purpose in this chapter is to understand the nature, the function and the implication of Christ's mediatorial work in His kingly office. Thus, we will proceed to discuss the origin of Christ's kingly office in the Old Testament. We will then go on to look at the actual kingly office of Christ, paying attention to different aspects of this office and the contemporary meaning of His kingly office; finally, we will conclude this chapter with a summary of what we have discovered.

5.2 THE MESSIANIC KINGLY OFFICE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The origin of messianic kingship office has its foundation in the Old Testament. This concept goes far back to Genesis 3: 15, where, after the fall of mankind, God promised

¹ Marshall 1980:79-80; Stott, 1990:77

the coming of the Messiah, through the seed of woman, who had to redeem human beings and destroy His enemy. In this regard Boettner explains that:

It is quite possible that Adam and Eve, like the people of every later generation, looked for or at least hoped for the fulfilment of that promise within their lifetime ... Likewise, it is quite possible that some of the promises made to David concerning the greatness of his son who was to sit on his throne, which promises had a preliminary and partial fulfilment in Solomon, led some to believe that the appearance of the Redeemer was near.²

Boettner goes on to quote Hodge, commenting that the seed promised to Abraham in Genesis 22: 18, through whom all the nations of the earth will be saved, is referred to as the seed of the woman. “This does not refer to his descendants collectively, but to Christ individually; we know from the direct assertion of the Apostle (Gal. 3: 16), and from the direct fulfilment of the promise.”³

The prediction of the coming Messiah is also in Genesis 49: 10. The Messiah was prophesied to come as the king (Numbers 24: 17, 1 Samuel 7: 16; Ps. 2: 6, 45, 72, 110; Isaiah 7 - 9, 11, Daniel 7: 13 - 14, Micah 5: 2, Zech 9: 9): “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this” (Isaiah 9: 6 - 7). Angel Gabriel applies the fulfilment of this prophecy to Jesus as he declares: “The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1: 32 - 33).⁴ Seccombe states:

Fundamental to the Messiah concept is that the future deliverer should be a human being and a descendant of David, that he should be specially appointed (anointed) by God as king of his people, that he should be endowed with the Holy Spirit for his task, that he should reign forever, and that his reign should extend from Israel to the Gentile nations. His special task is to

² Boettner (1965:218-219)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Seccombe, 2002:92

drive evil from the world. Indeed, Israel's messianic hope is the Bible's answer both to the problems of evil and suffering, and to the problem of power and conflict among nations.⁵

God's establishment of His covenant with David represents one of the theological high points of the OT Scriptures. This key event builds on the preceding covenants and looks forward to the ultimate establishment of God's reign on the earth. The psalmists and prophets provide additional details concerning the ideal Davidite who will lead God's chosen nation in righteousness. The New Testament applies various Old Testament texts about this Davidite to Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 1: 1-17; Acts 13: 33 - 34; Hebrews 1: 5; 5: 5). In the book of Revelation, John addresses Him as the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Revelation 19: 16).

Walter Kaiser suggests at least four great moments in biblical history that supply both the impetus for progressive revelation and the glue for its organic and continuous nature:

- (1) The promise given to Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, 17;
- (2) The promise declared to David in 2 Samuel 7;
- (3) The promise outlined in the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31;
- (4) The day when many of these promises found initial realization in the death and resurrection of Christ.⁶

Various passages in the Pentateuch anticipated that Israel would one day have a king (Genesis 17: 6, 16; 35: 11; Deuteronomy 17: 14 - 20) and constitute a kingdom (Numbers 24: 7, 19). However, this kingdom which God promises to establish through David does not replace the theocracy. It is regarded as God's throne/kingdom (1 Chronicles 28: 5; 2 Chronicles 9: 8; 13: 8). In fact, the Davidic ruler is called "the Lord's anointed" (1 Samuel 24: 6; 2 Samuel 19: 21). In 2 Samuel 7: 12 the Lord spoke of raising up the descendant or seed of David and in verse 13 declared that this descendant would erect His "house" or Temple. The reader immediately thinks of Solomon, David's son and heir to

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., 1974:298 "The Blessing of David: The Charter for Humanity," *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed. John H. Skilton (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed,)

the throne who constructed the first glorious Temple in Jerusalem. Yahweh then affirms that David's dynasty ("house") and throne/kingdom would be eternal (7: 13, 16). This statement in verses 13 and 16 vaults this portion of God's oath beyond the time frame of Solomon's reign (which ceased to exist immediately after his death). This incongruity between divine prophecy and human history invited the New Testament writers to await a different son of David who would rule eternally.⁷

Scholars have categorized a number of psalms under the heading of "royal psalms" because they share a common motif — the king.⁸ 2 Samuel 7: 11 - 16 is the most fundamental prophecy about the Davidic Messiah and serves as the basis for many other messianic scriptures even for most of the royal psalms. These psalms (Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, and 144) draw heavily on the idea of a Davidic dynasty and presuppose the covenant God established with David. They focus on a Davidic figure who, as Yahweh's son, lived in Zion, ruled over God's people, and was heir to the divine promise.⁹ As examples of this psalmic genre, two of the royal psalms receive consideration (Psalm 72, Psalm 89).

Psalm 72

By personal example and deed, the Davidic king was to promote righteousness and justice in the land (v. 1). He would do this by defending the cause of the afflicted, weak, and helpless and by crushing their oppressors (vv. 2, 4, 12 - 14). The ideal Davidic ruler would occasion the national experience of peace, prosperity, and international recognition (cf. vv. 3, 5 - 11, 15 - 17).¹⁰ God promised to give His anointed king dominion over the entire earth (vv. 8 - 11). Although this psalm may have been written at the beginning of Solomon's reign, it envisions ideals never fully realized in Israel's history. Only during the millennial reign of Christ will the peace and prosperity depicted by this psalm find fulfilment.

Psalm 89

⁷ Bergen, Robert., 1996:340

⁸ Van Rad, 1962:318-24; Dumbrell, 2002:251-2; Durham, 1984:425-29; Kaiser, 1995:83-90

⁹ Kaiser, W., 1978:159. *Toward an Old Testament Theology*

¹⁰ Chisholm Robert, 268 "A Theology of the Psalms" 268.

In concert with the initial expression of the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7, the psalmist affirms that the Davidic king enjoyed the status of God's "first born" (vv. 26 - 27). God promised His chosen king a continuing dynasty (v. 4), victory over his enemies (vv. 21 - 23), and dominion over the whole earth (v. 25). If a Davidic ruler failed to obey God's Word he would be severely disciplined and forfeit full participation in the benefits of the covenant (vv. 30 - 32). However, even in the wake of disobedience the Lord would not revoke His promise to the house of David (vv. 33 - 34). God's loving kindness to David, i.e. the Davidic Covenant, will endure "forever" (vv. 28, 29, 36, 37). The psalmist affirms that God's promise to David was as certain as the constantly occurring day/night cycle (v. 29; cf. Jer 33: 19 - 21) and as reliable as the continuing existence of the sun and moon, which never fail to make their appearances in the sky (vv. 35 - 37). This psalm depicts the psalmist seeking to resolve his belief in God's oath to David and the reality of his day, divine judgment for covenant treachery. After reminding God of His promise to David's house (vv. 1 - 37), he laments the fate experienced by the Davidic dynasty in his lifetime (vv. 38 - 51). Yahweh had "cast off and abhorred" His anointed ruler (v. 38) and had "profaned his crown" (v. 39). The Lord had given victory to the king's enemies (vv. 40 - 44) and had covered him with shame (v. 45). The psalmist cries out, "How long . . . will your wrath burn like fire?" and "Where is your former loving kindness which you swore to David?" (vv. 46, 49).¹¹

The psalmist's frustration demonstrates at least two truths. First of all, at this point in Israel's history, the ideal of a just king who would bring the nation lasting peace and prosperity was still an unfulfilled ideal. Secondly, the inability of Davidic rulers to live and rule in accordance with God's demands causes the reader to look forward to a Davidic figure who would one day perfectly satisfy those divine expectations.

5.3 CHRIST'S KINGLY OFFICE

The final office that Jesus exercises is that of king. The kingship is anticipated in David,

¹¹ Kaiser, 1974:301-303 "The Blessing of David", provides a helpful treatment of the differences between presentations of the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89.

the ideal King, and the shepherd of Israel. As was the case with the offices of prophet and priest, Jesus stands in continuity with Israel's kings, but in the particularity of His own narrative identity He also redefines the meaning of that office. Like Israel's kings, Jesus also is anointed by God. The Gospels report that at His baptism by John a dove descended on Jesus and a voice from heaven declared: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt.3: 17). But while He is anointed by God, like the rest of Israel's kings, Jesus also differs from them in the way in which He rules and in the nature of His kingdom. It is noteworthy to consider that at the baptism, Jesus was introduced as the king; but it was not until His resurrection that He was established at His kingly throne (Romans 1: 4; Philippians 2: 8 - 11). Milne writes that "His resurrection sealed his triumph, 'declared with power to be the Son of God' (Romans 1: 4), king and Lord over all things (Mt. 28: 18; Acts 2: 33 f.; 7: 55 f.; Rev.1: 5)." ¹²

Christ's kingship is the earliest Christian confession (Acts 10: 36; Romans 10: 9; 1 Corinthians 8: 6, 12: 3; Philippians 2: 11). In Trinitarian terms, "the Son is king, but he is such as the Father's regent, and the power he wields is that of the Holy Spirit" ¹³ The confession evidences His triumph over all powers. To say "Jesus is Lord" is "to recognize that no one or nothing else can be sovereign, that any pretenders to this title have been unmasked and deposed." ¹⁴ Christ triumphs over all powers that would enslave humanity – sin, demonic forces, and death (Hebrews 2: 14 - 15).

There are many important references in the Old Testament to the kingship of the Messiah as we have seen above. As God, Jesus shares the dominion of God over the universe. However, there is another dimension in which He rules, namely in the exercise of His redeeming activity. This is spoken of as the mediatorial kingship of Christ. As Berkhof writes: "In general we may define the mediatorial kingship of Christ as His official power to rule all things in heaven and on earth, for the glory of God, and for the execution of God's purpose of salvation". It is this mediatorial kingship that we have chiefly in mind when we speak of the Kingly Office of Christ (1 Corinthians 15: 24, 25 and Hebrews. 10:

¹² Milne 1998: 201

¹³ Sherman 2004:11

¹⁴ Ibid., 118

13).¹⁵

The state in which Christ has exercised this mediatorial kingly office has been a matter of divergence of opinions among theologians. While some have been of the opinion that this office is a post-Easter office, that is, it is assumed in His state of exaltation; others have claimed that Christ's kingly office has been assumed in both states of humiliation and of exaltation. The latter seems biblically justifiable. We have already referred to Berkouwer, who said that the healing of sick, the casting out of demons and the raising of the dead, were the signs of Christ's kingship.¹⁶

Milne writes that:

At his birth Jesus is welcomed as the one who fulfils this OT hope (Mt. 1: 1; 2: 2; Lk. 1: 31). He is the king come to restore the fortunes of God's people and to exercise God's rule on earth ... His triumphal entry ('Blessed is the King', Lk. 19: 38) and his trial (Mk. 14: 61f.; Jn. 18: 33 - 37; 19: 14 - 22) are clear witness to his fulfilment of this messianic role, and the later NT echoes this (Acts 17: 7; 1 Tim. 6: 15; Rev. 17: 14).¹⁷

Although Milne seems to identify the kingship of Christ to have been introduced at His state of humiliation, he ends up stating that the kingship of Christ was "significantly linked with the Calvary".¹⁸ And that "this office in Scripture is bound up with three particular moments in Jesus' mission: His resurrection, his ascension and his glorious return. These together form the climax of his work".¹⁹

In speaking of the state in which the kingly office of Christ was assumed, Berkhof explains that for consistent pre-millenarians the kingly office of Christ will start to be exercised only in the millennium at His second advent.²⁰ Berkhof points out also the view of the Socinians who "claim that Christ was neither priest nor king before His ascension."²¹ So Berkhof goes on to write that:

¹⁵ Berkhof 1959:406

¹⁶ Berkouwer 1965:69-70

¹⁷ Milne 1998: 201

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Berkhof 1959:409-410

²¹ Ibid.

The generally accepted position of the Church is that Christ received His appointment as mediatorial king in the depths of eternity, and that He began to function as such immediately after the fall, Prov. 8: 23; Ps. 2: 6. During the old dispensation He carried on His work as King partly through the judges of Israel, and partly through the typical kings. But though He was permitted to rule as Mediator even before His incarnation, He did not publicly and formally assume His throne and inaugurate His spiritual kingdom until the time of His ascension and elevation at the right hand of God, Acts 2: 29 - 36; Phil. 2: 5 - 11.²²

Grudem almost in the same line of thought as Berkhof explains that “after his resurrection, Jesus was given by God the Father far greater authority over the church and over the universe. God raised him up and “made him sit at this right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church” (Ephesians 1: 20 - 22; Matthew 28: 18; 1 Corinthians 15: 25). The authority over the church and over the universe will be more fully recognized by people when Jesus returns to earth in power and great glory to reign (Matthew 26: 64; 2 Thessalonians 1: 7 - 10; Revelation 19: 11 - 16). On that day he will be acknowledged as ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’ (Revelation 19: 16) and every knee shall bow to him (Philippians 2: 10).²³

Thus, following His ascension to heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father, Jesus’ Lordship entered upon a new dimension. He is now officially enthroned as ruler and king of the universe. From His throne He now governs the church and rules the world. However, the one common thread running through the entire New Testament narrative is that Christ has vanquished Satan, and has freed the human race and all God’s creation from His authority and has restored it all to God’s control and care. The New Testament depicts the entire life of Christ, not just the Christ-event, as victory over Satan and his entire evil kingdom: He resisted Satan’s temptations, He liberated those enslaved by

²² Ibid.

²³ Grudem 1994:629

demons and in His resurrection He conquered death. In victorious tones after debriefing His disciples, Jesus declares: “I saw Satan fall from lightning from heaven” (Luke 10: 18). In this statement Jesus indicates the depreciation of Satan’s powerful reign. Peter, as we have already seen, proclaims Christ as the one who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil (Acts 10: 38). Although the devil is portrayed as the one who has captured the world and exercises brutal authority over it, it is biblically clear that Christ as the king victoriously vanquished Satan’s brutal reign in the world. Olowala affirms that Christ, as God’s special appointed king, “displayed the power and the right of God over the curse of sin and the kingdom of Satan through his miracles.”²⁴ He further asserts that “just as Christ’s miracles of healing show his power over sin and its effects, his exorcisms show in a more direct way his power over Satan”.²⁵ This resounding victory of Christ was affirmed in His resurrection from the dead. He victoriously triumphed over the greatest enemies of human kind, which are Satan, sin and death.

a. The Nature of Christ Kingly Office

(1) Christ’s Kingship is Spiritual in Nature

Many Jews imagined that the Kingdom of which Jesus spoke was to be established in this world during his life on earth (Acts 1: 6). Before Pilate, Jesus stated that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18: 36). The kingdom of Christ is spiritual in that it refers not to a location but to a moral condition in the hearts of men, namely submission to the rule of God. Regeneration and repentance are required to participate in it (see John 3: 3; Matthew 18: 3). It is also spiritual in that it is not advanced by force of arms but by spiritual power (2 Corinthians 10: 4).²⁶ Berkhof comments that the kingship of Christ is spiritual because, (1) ‘It is His royal rule over His people or His Church.’ (2) ‘It bears directly and immediately on a spiritual end, the salvation of His people.’ (3) ‘And finally, it is spiritual, because it is administered, not by force or external means, but the Word and the Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth and wisdom, of justice and holiness, of grace and

²⁴ Olowala 1998:164

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Seccombe, 2002:167-68

mercy.’ “This kingship reveals itself in the gathering of the Church, and in its government, protection, and perfection”.²⁷

(2) His Kingship is something both present and future

Jesus speaks of the Kingdom as something present, e.g. Matthew 12: 28; Luke 17: 21. The Kingdom is present in the hearts of believers and in His own presence in their midst as King. However, Jesus plainly speaks of the Kingdom as something future, to be introduced by certain notable events (Matthew 22: 2 - 14; 25: 1 - 13; Luke 22: 29, 30; cf. 2 Timothy 4: 18; 2 Peter 1: 11). At this time what is now hidden in the hearts of humans will be openly revealed. “Christ reigns in the present through grace in the living experience of those who have come into the kingdom. He shall reign in the future when He is revealed in power and great glory as King, when every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue shall confess Him as Lord to the glory of God the Father.”²⁸

b. The Function and the implication of Christ’s kingly Office

Calvin has explained that Christ’s mediatorial kingship is for the benefit of believers. But this benefit is far superior and incomparable to the benefits that can be enjoyed in the earthly life, for they are spiritual.²⁹ According to Calvin, the function of Christ is mainly His kingly office. This kingship, being of a spiritual dimension, has benefits for the believers:

- Through it we are raised to eternal life;
- We are enriched with salvation;
- We are conquerors against evil forces;
- We are inspired and triumphant; and
- We are fortified and loved.³⁰

²⁷ Berkhof 1959:406

²⁸ McDonald, 1968:131-140

²⁹ Calvin 2001:424

³⁰ Ibid., 427-431

Thus a king Christ delivers us from the dominion of sin, the devil, and death (John. 12: 31; Colossians 2: 14 - 15). He sets us free and brings us into his kingdom. As King He is the representative of the new humanity, He has power and authority, He rules over His Church. Christ is King and sovereign Head over his Church and over all things for His Church (Ephesians 1: 22; 4: 15; Colossians 1:18; 2: 19). He executes this mediatorial kingship in His Church, and over His Church, and over all things on behalf of His Church. This kingship differs from that which essentially belongs to Him as God, for it is given to Him by the Father as the reward for His obedience and sufferings (Philippians 2: 6 - 11), and has as its especial object the up-building and the glory of His redeemed Church.

5.4 CONTEMPORARY MEANING OF CHRIST'S KINGLY OFFICE

The contemporary meaning of Christ's kingship is understood by the fact that Christ's kingship over the universe is exercised by His church, through His redemptive work. Christ, as exalted at the right hand of God the Father, continues to subdue His enemies through the church. He rules His church by His word and Spirit, and calls believers to run with Him and share His victory over the kingdom of darkness. Erickson, writing on the functions of Christ in His threefold office, especially on His kingly office, clearly explains that:

There is evidence that Christ is ruling today. In particular, the natural universe obeys him. Since Christ is the one through whom all things came into being (John 1: 3) and through whom all things continue (Col. 1: 17), he is in control of the natural universe ... The kingdom of God, over which Christ reigns, is present in the church. He is the head of the body, the church (Col. 1: 18). When he was on earth, his kingdom was present in the hearts of his disciples. And wherever believers today are following the lordship of Christ, the Saviour is exercising his ruling or kingly function.³¹

During Christ's state of humiliation, Jesus had declared that the in-breaking of the kingdom was the breaking of Satan's power: "But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12: 28). The author of the book of Hebrews (12: 28) writes that we (believers) have received an unshakable

³¹ Erickson 1983:768

kingdom. Indeed, through Jesus Christ, we have been made a kingdom, as pointed out by John in Revelation 1: 6. This means that Christ is presently reigning over his people. He is Lord! And in a real sense, we reign with Him! The apostle Paul speaks of how those who “receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ” (Romans 5: 17). Satan no longer reigns; he has been defeated, and in Christ, we are more than conquerors.

After Jesus’ resurrection, He said to His disciples: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." (Matt. 28:18). The same truth is taught in I Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1:20-22. This kingship should not be confused with the original kingship of Christ as the Son of God, though it pertains to the same realm. It is the kingship of the universe entrusted to Christ as Mediator in behalf of His people. As Mediator He now guides the destiny of individuals and nations, controls the life of the world and makes it subservient to His redemptive purpose, and protects His Church against the dangers to which it is exposed in the world. This kingship will last until the victory over the enemies of the kingdom of God is complete. When the end is accomplished, it will be returned to the Father (I Cor. 15:24-28).

Therefore, all believers share in Christ’s kingly office in some measure because God has “raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ” (Ephesians 2: 6). We will share more fully in His Kingship in the age to come when God promises that we will reign with Christ (Revelation 22:5). Christians have started to imitate Christ in each of His threefold office roles, in a subordinate way.³²

The Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day XII, Question 32), which was written in the Reformation age, answers the question, "Why are you called a Christian?" thus: "Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus a partaker of His anointing, that I may confess His name, present myself a living sacrifice of thanksgiving to Him, and with a free and good conscience fight against sin and the devil in this life, and hereafter reign with Him eternally over all creatures". That is a beautiful way of saying that every Christian is a prophet, a priest and a king.

³² Grudem 1994:630

5.5 SUMMARY

1. We have made reference to the fact that Christ as the king come to restore the fortunes of God's people and to exercise God's rule on earth. Christ's victory over the kingdom of darkness and over the power of death, and His present exaltation, are a triumph for human being, something in which human being shares and will share in the day of His final triumph (Romans 5:17; Revelation 5:10).

2. We have pointed out that Christ's kingly office was introduced from His birth, confirmed at his baptism, revealed in miraculous signs, exorcism and in his victory on the cross. Finally, His kingly office has been established at His exaltation, and He is ruling the world through the church until His coming back. Thus Christ can be described as the King of kings (Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 17:14).

3. Christ is King and sovereign Head over His Church and over all things for His Church (Eph. 1: 22; 4: 15; Col. 1: 18; 2: 19). He executes this mediatorial kingship in His Church, and over His Church, and over all things on behalf of His Church. This royalty differs from that which essentially belongs to Him as God, for it is given to Him by the Father as the reward of His obedience and sufferings (Phil. 2: 6-11), and has as its especial object the up-building and the glory of his redeemed Church. It attaches, moreover, not to His divine nature as such, but to His person as God-human.

Christ's kingly office provides us with a wealth of comfort and assurance. For while the nations rage one against another, while the earth groans beneath our feet, while there is sickness, disease, and economic hardship (Matthew 24:3 ff.), even now, our Lord is ruling and reigning until He makes his enemies his footstool (1Corinthians 15: 22-27). And so, while unbelievers may look around at the world conditions and see the apparent chaos as an excuse to scoff, saying, "Where is this 'coming' He promised?" (2 Peter 3: 3 – 4), the believer can take heart. The tumult we see around us is, in fact, proof that Christ is reigning and that He is directing all of history toward a great and final consummation, when He will come with great glory with His angels, as the great conquering king (1Thessalonians 4: 13 - 5: 11).

6. CONCLUSION: AN APPROPRIATION OF CHRIST'S WORK OF SALVATION IN LIGHT OF AN AFRICAN CONTEXT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, we have discussed Christ's work of salvation in general, through the perspective of His threefold office. We have pointed out that Christ's work of salvation has been satisfactory to God the Father, as the Bible shows that after having done all things according the will of the Father, He has been elevated to the highest place and received the name above all names (Philippians 2: 8 - 11). Duncan demonstrates the effectiveness of Christ's work of salvation as he explains:

The mission of Jesus, as we have seen, was to bring men to God, to lead them into living communion with God the Father, and to get them to adjust their lives to the demands of his sovereign will. And by his preaching and his teaching, by his works or power and by the influence of his daily life, he had already accomplished much. Many had begun to see the way of life opening out before them again and to walk in it. Hope took the place of despair, confidence the place of fear; and light arose in the darkness for the godly. As Jesus himself boldly declared: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matt.xi.5).³³

So great was the effect of his ministry that his followers were even ready to hail him as the heaven-sent Messiah.

It has already been pointed out in the background of this study that African theologians stress Jesus' central place within African Christianity and that there is a critical need to articulate the reality and significance of Christ in relation to the lives of Africans. In Nyamity's view, Christology is the most developed theme in African theology. His position was supported in the 1994 publication of the *Compendium of the History of Christianity in Africa* by John Baur, who concluded that Christology is the central concern of African theology in the search for the foundation of Christian theology in

³³ Duncan 1947:158

Africa.³⁴ In 1971, John Mbiti pointed out that even though there existed at that time many African Christologies which responded to the questions that African Christians were asking about their faith, there was an evident 'Christological crisis' in African Churches preventing Christians from appropriating Christ authentically, that is, receiving and responding to Christ in ways that are relevant and meaningful to their mentality, experience and social condition. Mbiti and many other African theologians, who in the early 1970s were concerned about the lack of any well articulated theological systems in Africa, have developed different Christologies within the last three decades.³⁵ One can no longer talk of a Christological crisis today in Africa; rather, one should be seeking ways of putting the different Christologies in Africa into conversation with each other, and explore how they could be integrated into the life of the Church and the wider society.

In the light of the theme of the Second African Synod, African theologians are encouraged to articulate the image of Christ who is able to inspire the Church and Christians in Africa to follow the path of reconciliation, justice, and peace. Constructing African Christologies of reconciliation, justice, and peace poses a fruitful challenge to African theologians and Christians. This task entails constructing a Christology in which 'there is a meeting place where Christ is conversing with the soul of Africa.'³⁶ This means that the main challenge facing African Christians and theologians is to show how Christ can help to heal and restore the wounded human hearts and souls in Africa which have led to destabilisation, brokenness, conflicts, wars, and sufferings among the millions of Africans.

Regarding African theology, Kretzschmar's comment is noteworthy, that African Theology is quite simply Christian Theology written in the context of Africa, bearing in mind the needs of Africa and the Gospel's message to Africa. This does not mean that Africans are cutting themselves off from the rest of the world, nor indeed writing an

³⁴ Baur, 2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African History, 62-1992 (Nairobi: Pauline's publications-Africa, 1994. Baur argues; 'The central theme in African theology is Christology. Although there are claimed to be 'innumerable Christologies.

³⁵ Schwarz Hans, 2005:500-516

³⁶ Taylor, 1963:7

exclusive theology. Rather, it means that there is a vision to understand fully and live the Gospel as Africans, rather than Americans or Europeans.³⁷

African theologians have not been slow to point out that the attempt to understand Christianity from a particular perspective, for the express purpose of making it relevant and meaningful to those to whom it is addressed, has been in progress throughout the many centuries of church history. From the early to the modern church, theologians have been engaged in the task of interpreting and presenting the Christian faith to the people of their time and place. African Theology in this century and on this continent is engaged in this very task, that of the intelligible proclamation of the Gospel. African Theology has deliberately addressed itself to the question of Christianity's contribution to, and relevance in, an African context. It was for this reason that the Gospel as it was preached in the mission churches was, in some of its emphases, irrelevant to the experience and questions of Africans. As a result, Christianity was not able to touch, renew or become part of the inner core of the experience of African believers. African Theology objects to the fact that Christianity, when interpreted in a purely Western sense, has been used to deny the value of African identity, culture and world-views. Thus, instead of the Christian faith working as leaven within African society, converts often tended to live in an uneasy balance between African and Western worldviews.³⁸

The fundamental reality is that no single cultural context can claim a monopoly on understanding Jesus Christ. The multiplicity of Christological images arising in Africa enhances the discovery of the fullness of Christ, which transcends all cultural constructs of the Gospel. The perception and experience of Jesus by different cultures throughout history has expanded our corporate understanding of Christ. Walls states that "it is a delightful paradox that the more Christ is translated into the various thought forms and life systems which form our various national identities; the richer all of us will be in our common Christian identity".³⁹

³⁷ Kretschmar, 1986:25

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Walls, 1996:54

This emphasis on the development of an African Christianity must, however, not be seen to be a mere harking back to the past. African theologians do not want simply to return to the old way of life, but rather, in the context of the Christian faith, to preserve that which is valuable in traditional African life and religion, to respond to the challenges of contemporary African experience. The overriding concern of African Theology is its emphasis on a holistic salvation, not salvation that affects only the soul or spiritual things but one that touches, heals and changes all of life. This follows from an African world-view, which is predominantly ontological, i.e. that religion is the essence of life. It is not a separate, spiritual compartment, but an attitude that penetrates life as a whole.

Thus, in this chapter, as we are concluding, we will briefly attempt to look at some propositions of how Christ's work of salvation can be effectively appropriated in African context.

6.2 A PROPOSED CHRISTOLOGY IN AFRICAN CONTEXT

The African people understand Jesus Christ in the context of their own religious consciousness.⁴⁰ Waruta points out that in African religious tradition, mediation between humanity and divinity, between natural and supernatural, between the world of human beings and the world of spirit, was accomplished through three main religious specialists – the prophet, the priest and the sacred king ruler, chief-elder or the accepted potentate.⁴¹

Africans are formulating their own Christology by their response to the person who Jesus is to them.⁴² Mugabe shares the same conviction that Africans cannot have a meaningful Christology when it is built on foreign theological models.⁴³ The Western-oriented Christian churches of Africa tend to present the same ecclesiastical structures and doctrines as their mother churches in Europe and North America.⁴⁴ The institutionalized model favoured by mainline churches neglect the human needs at the very grass-root level. An institutionalized community caters for many people; as a result it does not

⁴⁰ Bahemuka, 1989:11

⁴¹ Waruta 1991:53

⁴² Healey & Sybertz 1996:75

⁴³ Mugabe 1991:343

⁴⁴ Baur 1994:296

easily bring about “creative and prophetic change”.⁴⁵ The issues pertaining to the cultures and traditions of African people are thus not paid attention to or ignored.⁴⁶ Western theology is not rooted in the life of Africans and thus “becomes useless verbiage”.⁴⁷

Yet many thoughtful African Christians are concerned about the future of African Christianity. They note that almost one-third of those 350 million will be first-generation Christians. Moreover, they see that many Africans, both Christians and non-Christians, think of Christianity as a foreign religion. The gospel is often not seen as offering resources for life’s most deeply felt experiences. When face to face with death or famine or infertility, many African Christians resort to traditional rites and beliefs.

Thus the impact of Jesus on people’s lives leads them to question who Jesus is. It is a challenge for all believers in Christ to develop a Christology: An interpretation of who Jesus really is, in thought patterns and images familiar to them from their particular cultures.⁴⁸ The question arises from the experience of salvation; something good happens to people who have an encounter with Jesus Christ. The answer is based on their faith and in the actual way people live. The four Gospels differ in culture, geography, time and emphasis; these writers demonstrate the pluralism that exists in biblical Christology.⁴⁹ Jesus Christ is the universal saviour and thus the saviour of all Africans.⁵⁰ Schillebeeckx states insightfully: “The account of the life of Christians in the world in which they live is the fifth gospel; it also belongs to the heart of Christology”. African Christology is an important theme for broadening and deepening the meaning of the root metaphor, “a fifth gospel”.⁵¹

The Christological approach that has often been proposed by many African theologians is functional one, known as “Christology from below.” In this Christology the main emphasis is on what Christ has done for our salvation, rather than Christ’s nature. With functional Christology some names have been attributed to Christ to describe his function

⁴⁵ Gittins 1999:70

⁴⁶ Kapenda 2000:40

⁴⁷ Oosthuizen 2000:277

⁴⁸ Nyamiti 1994:63; Bediako 1990:10; Waruta 1991:53

⁴⁹ Johnson 1988:89; Mugambi 1989:136

⁵⁰ Bediako 1990:5

⁵¹ Schillebeeckx 1980:18

“Christ the Witch-Doctor”, “Christ the healer”, “Christ the Medicine man”, “Christ the Nganga”, “Christ the Chief”, “Christ the ancestor”, “Christ the liberator”, and “Christ the king”.⁵²

All these names underscore the power of Jesus to deliver from oppressive situations. This is the type of Christology that is meaningful to Africans. However, we have pointed out in chapter two that functional Christology cannot be considered in isolation from ontological Christology. The two are united and complementary, rather than exclusive.

When discussing the effectiveness of Christology in Africa, it is necessary to take into account the reality facing Africans. Africans are in search of a Christology that can secure them from all the powers of darkness. Okorochoa says “In the African religious worldview or consciousness nothing is thought impossible for the religion and religiousness permeates all aspects of life.” African aspects of traditional religions, such as charms and other things such as magical regalia, communicate the presence of religious power. Therefore, to tell an African to abandon these things without an equally life-encompassing replacement is to suggest that he or she live in a religious vacuum. Many Africans, even some of those who claim to be Christians, find themselves in this situation.⁵³

Appiah-Kubi analyses that the problem is that the Jesus Christ proclaimed in most mainline churches in Africa is “absent in several crisis situations of the African life – birth, puberty, marriage, illness and death.”⁵⁴ In other words, the Jesus Christ proclaimed in most mainline churches in Africa is foreign and detached from the Africans. To this extent, many African Christians often find themselves in a religious vacuum.

So, for Christ’s work of salvation to be effective in Africa, it is imperative to develop a doctrine of Christ that is relevant to instil confidence in Africans and to transform the lives of Africans. Udo says that undertaking the Christological task of this nature “is urgent not only for the benefit of the African Christian but also imperative for the life of

⁵² . Aylward Shorter, "Folk Christianity and Functional Christology", *African Ecclesial Review* (AFER), 24 (3): pp. 135-136.]

⁵³ Okorochoa 1992:169

⁵⁴ Appiah-Kubi 1997:65

the church on the continent.”⁵⁵

Above all, Jesus himself made the most exciting invitation as He says “Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11: 28). Rest from what? The Bible is clear that the rest or the salvation received in Christ was from sin, the corrupted world, the devil, and death (Ephesians 2: 1 - 7, Hebrews 2: 14 - 15). For many Africans, in this invitation, Christ set Himself as the sufficient healer of all life’s plagues. Moreover, He significantly promised that “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10b). In this invitation, Christ promises fullness of life. Africans convert to Christianity because they want this promised rest and the promised abundant life from Christ. In light of these promises of Christ, any deficiencies in Christianity ultimately constitute a Christological problem.

Moltmann suggests that: “The real essence of the church depends not on its ecclesiology but on its Christology. Whether the Church is believable today depends on the faith which the Church has in Christ.”⁵⁶ In an African’s view, the faith of the African church in Christ must encompass total dependence on him, not only for the after-life but also for its present need. In saying this, we mean that the African Christians’ disappointment with Christianity is in real terms a disappointment with Jesus Christ, who is the Lord and Saviour. For, in the final analysis, this is indicative of Jesus Christ’s insufficiency to address the problems of the Africans. This therefore questions the consuming need for a Jesus Christ endowed with sufficient power to deliver and secure them from the malevolent and gratuitous African spiritual forces. The African continent is desperate for a Jesus Christ sufficient to address the paranoia that permeates every aspect of African life.

Africa is a continent still suffering under different aspects of oppressive attack such as diseases, poverty, civil wars and all kinds of disharmonies, which are generally attributed to the devil and demons. Thus Africans need a conqueror to liberate them from these oppressive structures and phenomena. Imasogie proposes that Christ “must be presented first and foremost as the Victor and the Liberator par excellence who forever lives to

⁵⁵ Udo 1983:162

⁵⁶ Moltmann 1972:280

destroy the demonic forces wherever found.” Christ is the liberator who breaks the chains of all structures and institutions that are oppressive.⁵⁷ Oduyoye believes this is the aspect that makes Christ attractive to Africans. She writes: “The Christ of Christianity touches human needs at all levels, and Africans are but ordinary members of the human race feeling the need for salvation.”⁵⁸ She goes on to say that like Yahweh who rescued his people from childlessness and diseases, famine and fire, from flood and from the deep sea, from disgrace and humiliation, “so we find Jesus Christ in the New Testament snatching women and men away from all domination, even from the jaws of death”.⁵⁹ As liberator, He vanquishes all forces that are agents of oppression and suppression, in the process emancipating people to achieve perfect humanness. This paradigm’s point of convergence is on Christ’s victory over the forces of evil. Thus He could be likened to warrior king who vanquishes His enemies and liberates His people from all aspects of slavery. As the warrior king He is the victor or conqueror against the demonic spirits, the powers of sickness and diseases, poverty and death.⁶⁰

Thus Africans, being existentialists, need functional Christology as the theological approach that appeals to them. Since theological activity moves between two poles, the Christian message (primarily found in the Bible, and secondarily explained in creeds and confessions, the tradition of the interpretation of the texts, and the fresh interpretation of the texts by a particular scholar), and the experience of the people, a relevant and dynamic theological activity must take the two hermeneutical poles into consideration. De Gruchy clearly makes the point that theological insight often arises out of struggling with the meaning of Christian faith at critical moments in the life of the Church, moments when biblical tradition and its symbols come alive with new transforming power.⁶¹

It is the role of the theologians to critically examine the genuineness, the interpretation, and the application of biblical texts in theology. The crises to be addressed, however, belong to the community of faith. The Christ of the Bible is interested in all the affairs of mankind. He is not only interested in the salvation of their souls but also in their

⁵⁷ Imasogie 1985:225

⁵⁸ Oduyoye 1986:99

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Manus 1998:13

⁶¹ De Gruchy, 1986:146.

deliverance from suffering. The suffering in forms of immorality, sickness, poverty, and oppression is common in Africa, just as it was common in Palestine at the time of Jesus. Africans are under the bondage of fear. Demonic power threatens them. They suffer from hopelessness and they need deliverance. It is only Christ (God-human) in his mediatorial work of salvation that can save Africans.

Thus the approach recommended in this work is that theology should begin with the critical study of the Bible. This should be followed with a critical study of African culture (which is largely found in contemporary experience) and situation. The findings from the two studies should then interact critically. This would produce a new brand of African theology. The interpretive circle continues as the new theology re-interacts with the texts of scripture. This would lead, in turn, to refined interpretation of both scripture and the developing African theology. This should be a continuing activity. Hendricks in his book *Studying Congregation in Africa* (2004:27-28), writes that:

In doing theology in Africa, we must be realistic about our situation in Africa. Theology should study the global social, economic, political mega trends and how they influence our continent. What are the national and local realities with which we should deal? Asking these questions is part of the discernment process that accompanies the primary question: how must we participate in the triune God's missionary praxis? Theological honesty about the contextual realities that face Africa would help the church that actively witnesses to all spheres of life about the way, the truth and the life.

Nthamburi also states that Christology in Africa will be meaningful and empowering only "when we translate it to our contextual situation in daily life." When Africans are absolutely certain that Jesus Christ is sufficiently able to address their profoundest African problems, they will be compelled to yield to Him as their Lord and saviour.⁶² This is what Nthamburi meant when he said that Christ cannot be relevant to the Africans if He is unconcerned about the social, political, economic and spiritual reality of their existence. Indeed, Jesus Christ's right and authority to be regarded as Lord and Saviour in Africa is absolutely contingent on his sufficiency to grant the African Christians and their possessions security against the evil marauding regime. Any understanding of the Lordship and salvific work of Jesus Christ that is only preoccupied

⁶² Nthamburi 1989:57

with the salvation of the soul from hell is insufficient to invoke the loyalty of the African Christian.⁶³

Thus, the function of the mediatorial work of Christ in the threefold office of prophet, priest and king is expressed in many different titles given to Christ by African theologians in the light of His mediatorial work. Among those titles, we will briefly discuss some of them in relation with the threefold office of Christ. However, it is noteworthy to bear in mind that there is not one single title that can give us the full picture of Christ's mediatorial work. Even biblically and traditionally many titles were needed to do justice to Christ's mediatorial work.

1. Christ, the Healer

In relating Jesus as the Healer, we are dealing with the African concept of witchdoctor or *nganga*.⁶⁴

Among Christians, and in the West, some may find "witchdoctor" too strong given negative associations with the word "witch." Yet "witchdoctor" itself is not a negative word, anymore than doctor is. The witchdoctor is a doctor who treats witches, whose expertise is knowledge of witchcraft and how to deal with it. He is not a sorcerer.⁶⁵ In contemporary terms, he practices alternative medicine. On the other hand, it may imply an acceptability of belief in witches. Yet such belief is widespread in Africa. Hence Jesus the Witchdoctor is as good an expression as Jesus the Healer. Christ is a non-witch, an anti-witch, a witch healer or doctor, a physician who has power over the powers of evil.

This title of 'witchdoctor' resonates well with what we know about the Jesus of the Gospels. Although post-Enlightenment skepticism has dismissed most of Jesus' miracles, healing was a significant dimension of Jesus' ministry.⁶⁶ Today, many mainline churches

⁶³ Ibid., 58

⁶⁴ See R. Buana Kibongi as well as the excellent treatment by Matthew Schoffeleers, "Folk Christology in Africa: The Dialectics of the Nganga Paradigm," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 19, no. 2 (1989): 157-83 as well as his earlier "Christ as the Medicine-man and the Medicine-man as Christ: A Tentative History of African Christological Thought," *Man and Life, Journal of the Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology*, Calcutta, vol. 8, 1 & 2, pp. 11-28. Also Obeng, *Asante Catholicism*, 203-5, speaks of the *duyefoo* (medicine man, healer, witchdoctor) among the Asante Roman Catholics of Ghana and how it is applied to Christ as a pan-ethnic *duyefoo* in Catholic ritual

⁶⁵ Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion, The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, esp. 179-91, 209-34.

⁶⁶ Donald 1986:170-176

when speaking of the prophetic office of Christ and its application in the church today, all of the attention is given only to His preaching and teaching aspect. Nor should the healings and exorcisms be separated from the preaching. Both reflect Jesus the healer - healing in words and in deed - the two always being integrated in Jesus for whom praxis was never separated from proclamation. We have indicated in chapter 3.2, that Bosch considers Luke 4:16-21 not only in the perspective of Christ's mission, but of the Church as well.

Aylward Shorter⁶⁷ takes healing as the perspective for his Christology. Healing can be seen as the central feature of the life and ministry of Jesus. African traditional interest in healing requires a Christology that is based on Jesus' healing function. Both the traditional African medicine man and Jesus practiced a holistic form of healing that includes the physical, psycho-emotional, moral-spiritual, social and environmental levels. Jesus took not only an integral approach to healing, but he also taught about definite healing of the sickness of the world and that suffering has salvific power, which he showed in his own suffering and death. "Jesus is the healer, because through his own suffering he is present in human suffering."⁶⁸ The believer is called to be a wounded healer with Christ. Christianity will maintain credibility in Africa only if it shares, side by side with the African person, the struggle for life.⁶⁹

In spite of the fact that many Evangelical theologians deny the continuation of miracles and healing in the church, in his book *Renewal Theology*, Williams concludes the section entitled "*EXCURSUS: ON THE CESSATION OF MIRACLES*" by stating:

I am excited that the contemporary spiritual renewal is vigorously reaffirming the validity of miracles for our time. This renewal has made bold to reclaim the New Testament dynamism of the church in which God not only works supernaturally and therefore miraculously, to bring about new life but also works miracles of many kinds.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Shorter, Aylward, 1985 *Jesus and the Witchdoctor: An Approach to Healing and Wholeness* (London: Geoffrey Chapman).

⁶⁸ Küster 2001: 65

⁶⁹ Schreiter 1991:132

⁷⁰ Williams 1996:158-168

There is great need in Africa as well as throughout the world for personal healing - physical, mental, emotional, spiritual. Not only for personal healing, but also economic, political, social, tribal, and national wounds are staggering. The nations of Africa have been wounded by the slave trade, colonization, the post-colonial formation of the nation-states, neo-colonialism's economic dependency, intertribal violence and war, the corruption of many post-independence national leaders, and on and on. In spite of negative factors associated with Christianity in Africa, Oduyoye sees the continued appeal of Christianity in its response to the primal African cry for salvation. Christ is Savior the Rescuer.⁷¹ To love God with one's whole heart is to love God's people as well, to desire justice, and to stand in solidarity with those disadvantaged by the social structures of our world. Jesus reached out to social outcasts and those branded as sinners. Jesus himself stands in this prophetic tradition.⁷²

2. Christ, the Liberator

Englebert Mveng indicates that, in Africa there is an anthropological poverty that is as real as economic poverty.⁷³ Liberation must be liberation of the African cultures as well as social and economic. At the same time, however, contemporary Africans cannot become culturally conscious, genuinely African, without addressing the human deprivations in African life. Hence there is the growing awareness that there can be no inculturation apart from socio-political liberation, and no liberation apart from inculturation and the africanization of Christianity.

Jesus lived in a society, which was oppressed and exploited by the Romans. He identified himself, with those who suffer under oppression and are rejected. Jesus' life message, the kingdom of God, was the liberation of the entire human person and of all humanity in justice and love. It was his mission to fight against poverty, oppression and lack of freedom (Luke 4:18). Jesus died in this struggle against oppression. But by raising him, God has shown that he was for him and with him in this fight against injustice. According

⁷¹ Oduyoye 1986:98

⁷² Donald 1986: 146-176

⁷³ *L'Afrique dans l'Eglise, Paroles d'un Croyant* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985). Also see "Impoverishment and Liberation: A Theological Approach for Africa and the Third World," in *Paths of African Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 154-65.

to Laurenti Magesa to consider Jesus Christ as Liberator in the African situation is an attempt to present the only Jesus that can be understandable and convincing among the African rural masses, urban poor and idealistic youth. This is the Jesus who actually calls individuals and peoples to freedom by his work and action. He gives voice to the voiceless so that farmers for instance can demand fair prices for their produce. He gives courage to the downcast so that industrial workers, domestic servants, and casual laborers can say no to the exploitation of their person and labor. Jesus offers hope to prostitutes, parking boys, and the sick and lame so that they realize that in spite of their degradation, suffering, and hardship, they are equal members of the society and children of God, with dignity in his sight.⁷⁴

3. Christ, the Ancestor⁷⁵

The traditions venerating ancestors in Africa are strong and widespread, even if not universal. More attention has been given to ancestor as a way of "africanizing" Jesus than to almost any other metaphor. The concept as applied to Jesus, however, needs to be qualified. Jesus is not just one of our ancestors, but ancestor par excellence, a unique ancestor. There is a pre-eminence, a priority, to Jesus' ancestorship. It is clear that Jesus for African Christians is not just like all the other ancestors, but it is also clear that he is not totally unlike the ancestors.⁷⁶

Bantu people see the ancestors as the highest link after God in the chain of being. The divine vital force flows from God through the ancestors to those who live now. To become an ancestor it is not enough just to die, one must also have led a virtuous life and have contributed to the abundance of life. In their death passage the ancestors have

⁷⁴ Schreiter 1991:57

⁷⁵ Cf. Francois Kabasélé, "Christ as Ancestor and Elder Brother" in Schreiter, 116-27; see also Küster, 71-74.

⁷⁶ Perhaps the strongest critic of "ancestor" as a helpful christological title has been Aylward Shorter. See his "Conflicting Attitudes to Ancestor Veneration in Africa," *AFER*, 11, no. 1 (1969): 27-37. His is a positive appraisal of the role of ancestors in African Christian life, but he expresses hesitancy with respect to its value in christology. See also his "Ancestor Veneration Revisited," *AFER*, 25, no. 4 (1983): 197-203. In his 1983 article, he does write, "But, whereas the 'ancestor' concept does not illuminate or develop our understanding of the person and role of Christ, the person and role of Christ can and does illuminate and redeem the African understanding of the 'ancestor' " (202). Certainly the ancestor concept has to be 'purified' or further theologized as it is applied to Christ. It is not applied to Christ univocally. The theologian who has utilized ancestrology most extensively in theology is Nyamiti, incorporating it into a theology of the Trinity as well.

become more powerful than other human beings. They have the capacity to influence, guide, correct, punish and bless the lives of human beings. The ancestors are able to increase or diminish the vital force of earthly beings. The primary role of the ancestors is to transmit and safeguard life. Jesus has come so that we may have life and have it in abundance. The moral teaching of Jesus is centered on love, which creates the suitable milieu for life to increase. As the ancestors watch over the life of their descendants and continuously strengthen it, so does Christ continuously nourish the life of believers. Christ can also be seen in the sense of *Elder Brother*. The ancestors, the elder siblings of the great human family, have come first and therefore they are closer to the source and foundation of vital force. In this sense Christ is the *Elder Brother par excellence*, the one who existed from the very beginning and is closest to God, the origin of all life. Bénézet Bujo expands on this thought by understanding Christ as the *Proto-Ancestor*, the unique and first ancestor, and the source of life and highest model of ancestorship.⁷⁷

To avoid misunderstanding due to limitations associated with the ancestor concept, Bujo prefers the title Proto-Ancestor for Christ. The historical Jesus lived the African ancestor-ideal to the highest degree. Jesus manifested those qualities which Africans attribute to their ancestors. Yet the concept as applied to Jesus is only applied analogically. Jesus is not one ancestor among many, but *the* ancestor par excellence. The title of Proto-Ancestor "signifies that Jesus did not only realize the authentic ideal of the God-fearing African ancestors, but also infinitely transcended that ideal and brought it to new completion."⁷⁸ It is not only the earthly Jesus' exemplary life but also his death and resurrection which establish him as Proto-Ancestor. Jesus Christ's proto-ancestorship is ultimately grounded in his Incarnation as the meeting point between God and humankind.

4. Christ, the Chief (King)

Some earlier Christological efforts utilized the concept of the African chief as one way of naming Jesus within an African context, although the suggestion of chief has also been

⁷⁷ Küster 2001:74-76

⁷⁸ Nyamiti 1996:80

criticized.⁷⁹ Ukachukwu Manus, a lay Nigerian theologian, however, has developed a *King Christology* which deserves attention.⁸⁰ Manus' effort is distinctive. Its weaknesses are the easily-made assumption that the title "king" carries with it a connotation of domination and triumphalism as well as the fact that the title is not particularly African. But this is why one must pay closer attention to the Christology Manus proposes, for it is the specifically African concept of kingship which he suggests as a way of interpreting Jesus who is not simply Christ the King, but Christ the African King.

Manus' suggestion of kingship as a hermeneutical key is grounded in his own ethno-historical studies of African kingship as well as in New Testament studies. In neither are there traces of triumphalism, rather both share the notion of a servant-king. Manus studied in particular how kingship functioned among the Yoruba (in southwest Nigeria), the Baganda (of Uganda), the Shilluk (of southern Sudan), and the Zulu (of South Africa). He looked at the manner of selecting and installing the king in each of these cultures, the sacral nature of the kingship, and the king's role as mediator between God and the people and concomitant priestly functions. African kingship is (among the Yoruba and Shilluk) and was (among the Baganda and Zulu) a sacralized institution. Incumbents fulfill their sacral duties as divine agents for the good of their subjects.⁸¹

The theology of kingship in the Old Testament and its understanding of Yahweh as king (e.g., Isaiah 43:15; Psalms 5:2, 10:16, 84:3), the kingdom of God in Jesus' preaching, and the New Testament's understanding of Jesus as the Messiah, "the anointed servant-king",⁸² all manifest significant parallels with the African understanding of kingship. It is important to emphasize that "the kingship of Jesus is never exactly like any of the earthly African kingships",⁸³ that the kingship of Jesus transcends African traditional religious cultures,⁸⁴ but that at the same time there is a complementarities between the kingship of

⁷⁹ Harry Sawyerr, an Anglican from Sierra Leone, was critical of the suggestion that Christ be presented as chief, *Creative Evangelism*, pp. 72-74. It must be admitted that Jesus as king will speak only to those societies with a particular tribal structure in which there were hereditary kings or chieftains. Some ethnic communities are politically structured around a council of elders.

⁸⁰ Manus 1993, *Christ, the African King* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 71-117

⁸² *Ibid.*, 118-167, 210-213

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 233

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 237

Christ and African kingship.⁸⁵

The Congolese theologian Francois Kabasélé says that Bantu Christians have placed Jesus in the category of Chief. As they see him, Jesus has fully realized the prerogatives of a Bantu chief. The chief's function is to make sure that the vital force that originates in God is transmitted to the people entrusted to him. It is also the chief's duty to protect the people from any evil power. Power belongs ultimately to Jesus; he is the mighty hero who has overcome the power of evil. Bantu ancestral faith has taught them that God is Chief of the universe, the supreme recourse. Jesus is Chief, because he is the Chief's son and emissary. Jesus is seen as Chief, because he is strong, generous, wise, and a reconciler of human beings. Jesus is understood as the Chief par excellence, because he gives life and security to the people.⁸⁶

Naming Jesus as African king gives Jesus a home in Africa's rich spiritual universe. Jesus functions as a king *à la mode africaine*. Jesus is Servant-King or Servant-Leader. Manus' Christology is as much a servant Christology as it is a king Christology and it offers a model for African leaders, both civil and religious. It is better to include "servant" in the title (i.e. Christ the African servant-king) because the greatest challenge facing a royal or king Christology is that the title can so easily connote oppressor even in an African context. Given the concept of African kingship as interpreted by Manus, it becomes an appealing way to speak of Jesus Christ. It is biblical. It unites within it significant African themes, including the relationship of the king to the ancestors. Perhaps, rather than simply naming Christ as king, one might combine elements of African Ancestry and kingship traditions and speak of Jesus as the founding or foundational ancestral king. The king as "for the people" and yet "one of the people", shows ready application both to Jesus and to problems facing Africa today, including Kā Mana's challenge to reconstruct Africa. Can Jesus the African ancestral servant-king liberate his people as God did of old? Of course, the image of Jesus the king completes the threefold way of speaking of Christ as prophet-liberator, priest-healer, and servant-king.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Ibid., 237

⁸⁶ Cf. Francois Kabasélé, "Christ as Chief" in Schreier, 1191:103-115.

⁸⁷ Waruta 1991:40-64

6.3 SUMMARY

Christology is the essence for salvation and transformation; without Christology there is no Christianity. If all the power for salvation, restoration and transformation of the universe has been given to Christ, it is then important for the work of Christ to be faithfully and appropriately applied in African context for it to bring the transformation needed. Christ Himself declares that “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). In this statement, Jesus exclusively took upon Himself the entire responsibility of meeting all the salvific needs of those who believe in Him. We have pointed out that according to Matthew 11:28 and John 10:10 Jesus invites people to rely on Him, so that He may meet all their needs. If it is only in Christ that the human being can find rest, peace, joy, transformation - in short, salvation - it is crucial for Christology in Africa to be more attractive and practical by taking into consideration the African world view.

Since Christ is the absolute essence of Christianity, a profound grasp of His person and His work is necessary. In order to be confident in Christ, it is necessary for African Christians to gain a sound understanding of His person and work. It is only the understanding of who Jesus is and what He has done and is still doing, and hence its implications upon life, that can bring transformation in Africa. De Jongh states that: “Jesus Christ is the central figure to, and the main message of, the Christian faith, and if an understanding of his person and work is not developed within Africa, then it is probable that the growth of the church will be stunted.”⁸⁸ In the same line of thought, Waruta says that “without a very clear concept of who Jesus is to African Christians, the church in Africa may be standing on quicksand.”⁸⁹ Christological negligence or misapplied Christology is a prescription for ecclesiastical disaster and social chaos.

⁸⁸ De Jongh 1996:19

⁸⁹ Waruta 1991:56

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